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STARBURST

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STAR TREK

THE MOTION PICTURE

**ALIEN
CREATOR
DAN O'BANNON**

ON DARK STAR, DUNE
AND THE MAKING
OF ALIEN

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SCIENCE FICTION**

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LOST IN SPACE TO SAPPHIRE AND STEEL



**STAR TREK
THE MOTION
PICTURE**

—SEE PAGE 4



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STARBURST

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Volume 2, Number 5

It's been a long time coming, but finally the movie version of Star Trek is a finished product, and should be on a screen near you any time now. Expecting the same deluge of mail as we got in the controversy of last year, over *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars*, we look forward to your comments on both *Star Trek - The Motion Picture* and the Disney production opening around the same time, *The Black Hole*. All this plus *Meteor* and *Time After Time* soon to open, *Buck Rogers* soon to be a tv series in Britain, plus *Empire Strikes Back* and *Superman 2* waiting in the wings. It looks like another good year for screen fantasy!

Des Skinn

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At last! After ten years without producing any new episodes of the tv *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry has all but finished the new big-budget *Star Trek* movie. *Starburst* looks at the genesis of the film.

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Despite having been made over fifty years ago, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* remains one of the most visually powerful films in the history of cinema. In place of our regular *SF Classics* series we present a special photo feature on the movie.

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The current science fiction boom is so wide spread that even in Japan the tremors are being felt. And now Britain is beginning to feel the effects of the backlash. We review no less than 3 sf cartoon offerings from the Land of the Rising Sun.

STAR TREK... THE

"SPACE . . . THE FINAL FRONTIER. THESE ARE THE VOYAGES OF THE STARSHIP ENTERPRISE. ITS FIVE YEAR MISSION: TO EXPLORE STRANGE NEW WORLDS, TO SEEK OUT NEW LIFE AND NEW CIVILISATIONS, TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE . . ."



MOTION PICTURE

That famous split-infinitive opened each of the 79 episodes of the mid-sixties tv phenomenon *Star Trek*. And although no new episodes have been seen for over ten years, the show still has an enormous following through the repeats which have been running almost constantly over the last decade.

Many fans' hopes were raised when it was announced around 1975 that Paramount planned to back *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry to produce two or three *Star Trek* tv movies. The cost would have been huge. For a start, the sets that had stood on Paramount's sound stages while the series was in production had been dismantled. After several story treatments for possible tv movies had been rejected by Paramount, it became apparent that a mere three tv movies could not justify the cost of redesigning/reconstructing the Enterprise sets.

This was where the revived *Star Trek* began running into trouble. While many of the cast were happy to sign on for the occasional tv feature, some members — particularly Leonard Nimoy — were reluctant to commit themselves to a full series, due mainly to prior commitments.

It was around this time that the first news of a big-budget sf movie from the director of the highly successful *American Graffiti* broke. The film opened in America in May 1977 and broke all box office records in the first few days of release. It was apparent that there was a market for expensive sf movies despite what Hollywood had been saying for years. That, more than anything else, convinced Paramount that a feature-length, big-budget movie was in order. Which, in turn, meant that Leonard Nimoy was back in again.

Now, after all the trials and tribulations, *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* is a reality.

The movie reunites the entire *Star Trek* crew, headed by William Shatner as Capt James T. Kirk and Leonard Nimoy as Mr Spock. Also on board are De Forest Kelley as Dr "Bones" McCoy, James Doohan as Chief Engineer "Scotty", George Takei as Sulu, Nichelle Nichols as Communications Officer Uhura, Walter Koenig as Security Chief Chekov, Majel Barrett as Dr Christine Chapel and Grace Lee Whitney as Transporter Chief Rand. Newcomers to the cast include Stephen Collins as Commander Willard Decker and Persis Khambatta (see interview in *Starburst II*) as the exotically beautiful and



Above: Dr Christine Chapel (Majel Barrett), Dr Leonard McCoy (De Forest Kelley), Admiral James T. Kirk (William Shatner), Mr Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Captain Willard Decker (Stephen Collins) are perplexed by the Deltan physiology of Ilia (Persis Khambatta). Below: The top officers of the Enterprise discuss their strategy against the alien force which menaces the Universe.



"I somehow always have felt that we would be back together. Regardless of what I was doing, of where my career was taking me at the moment, I knew Captain Kirk was not behind me. He still would be very important in my future life, and work". — William Shatner.

sensuous Ilia, from the planet Delta Four. The filming required the use of eight huge soundstages at Paramount Studios, four of which housed the Enterprise sets.

The Enterprise itself has been redesigned both inside and out. For example, each station on the new bridge of the Enterprise is completely operable. Each cast member was required to learn how to use the complex instruments on the panels and to know the coding of the

STAR TREK... THE MOTION PICTURE

various flashing lights, signals and screens.

The highly advanced technological apparatus — including such gadgetry as phaser guns, photon torpedoes, communicators and tricorders — and the various ships — were the result of extensive research. Among the groups furnishing advice on the film was the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), including its Jet Propulsion Laboratory. The object of the research was to ensure that the scientific aspects of the film are as authentic as possible. While such details might be missed by the average layman, the creative team behind the film sought to ensure authenticity in every phase of

production. This extended not only to the Enterprise sets, but to the Klingon cruisers, a Vulcan shuttle and numerous space travel craft as well as a remarkable space office complex and orbital dry dock.

Gene Roddenberry, a distinguished producer, writer and creator/producer of the original *Star Trek*, selected veteran director Robert Wise, the winner of four Academy Awards (two each for *The Sound of Music* and *West Side Story*), to helm *Star Trek — The Motion Picture*. Recognized as one of the screen's foremost director-producers, Wise was responsible for such fantasy classics as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The*

Haunting and *The Andromeda Strain*.

Gene Roddenberry and Harold Livingston wrote the screenplay for *Star Trek — The Motion Picture*. Director of photography Richard Kline has lensed such films as *King Kong*, *Camelot* and *The Andromeda Strain*. Jerry Goldsmith, composer, and conductor of the music score, was an Academy Award winner for *The Omen* and three times an Emmy Award winner.

The monumental task presented by *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* also included the designing and manufacturing of more than 700 costumes. These included the new uniforms for the Enterprise crew and the native robes and gowns



Above: Kirk and Decker consult Chief Engineer Scott in the engine room of the Enterprise. Right: Admiral Kirk addresses the crew of the Enterprise before they set off into the void. Their mission: to thwart a dangerous alien menace which is threatening to destroy the civilized Universe. The crew now includes many aliens other than Spock, resulting in a truly integrated Federation Starship.





"The first time we were together, I think we all sensed a very rare chemistry among us — great care must have been taken in choosing each individual for his or her role. When we met again for the motion picture — and I'm sure I can speak for all of us — we felt that same warmth for each other, and strong attachment for our roles. I would not have wanted *Star Trek* to have been made without Mr Spock, and I wouldn't have wanted anybody else to be playing Mr Spock".

— Leonard Nimoy.



of the inhabitants of the many far-flung worlds seen in the movie: Vulcans, Deltans, Klingons, Rigellians, Andorians, Arcturians, Betelgeusians, Megarites, Kazarites, Saurians, K'normians, Rhaandarites, Zaranites and Aamazzarites. The strange races from these imaginary planets also meant an added challenge for a crew of 17 make-up artists.

Star Trek — The Motion Picture is scheduled to open on December 20th 1979 in London. Despite rumours to the contrary, director Robert Wise is adamant that the film will make the deadline. Doubts and eyebrows were raised when news broke that the entire special effects team of Robert Abel Associates had upped and walked out after what was termed by those closest to the production as "creative differences". However the day was saved when Doug Trumbull, who had set up the Abel deal in the first place, stepped into the breach to save the special effects — and the picture — from disaster.

The story-line is so tightly under wraps that even the publicity material, usually headed "not for publication", included no more than the opening fifteen minutes of the film. What *is* known is that the Enterprise is ordered into space from its dry dock, in stationary orbit high above San Francisco, to intercept an alien craft that had invaded Federation territory, sweeping all Federation defences before it as though they didn't exist. Command of the Enterprise is taken from the new skipper, Willard Decker, and handed over to James T. Kirk, now an admiral in Starfleet Command. McCoy and Spock join the ship later in the film.

The movie sounds as though it could be what *Star Trek* fans have been pleading for since the original series ceased production in 1969. Let us hope that no one is disappointed. ●

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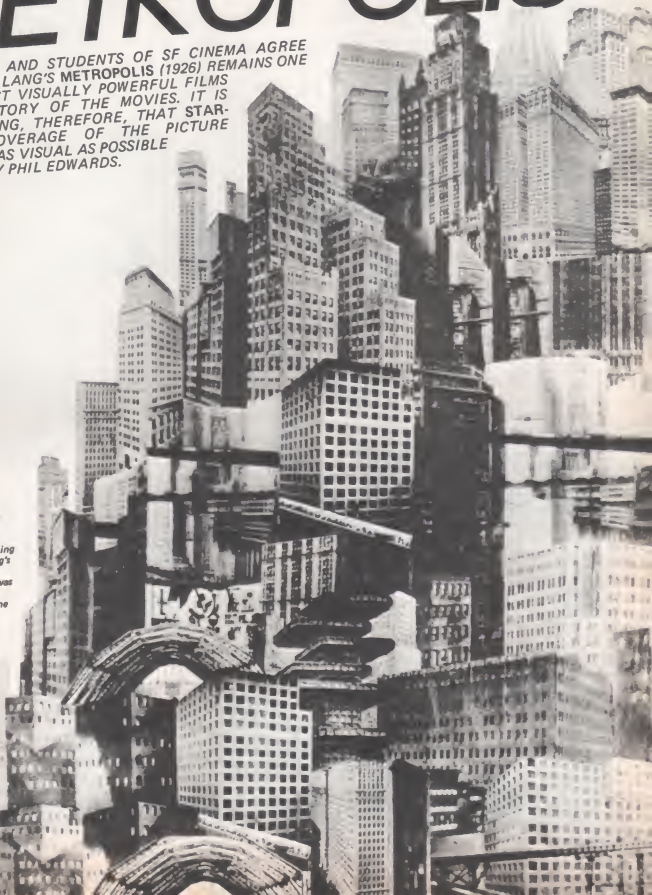
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A STARBURST SF CLASSIC METROPOLIS

MOST FANS AND STUDENTS OF SF CINEMA AGREE THAT FRITZ LANG'S METROPOLIS (1926) REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST VISUALLY POWERFUL FILMS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MOVIES. IT IS ONLY FITTING, THEREFORE, THAT STARBURST'S COVERAGE OF THE PICTURE SHOULD BE AS VISUAL AS POSSIBLE
CAPTIONS BY PHIL EDWARDS.

In 1924 German director Fritz Lang visited the United States to study American film-making techniques. As Lang's ship entered New York Harbour, he was struck by the futuristic look of the city's skyline. The image of that skyline formed the spring-board for Lang's next film Metropolis.



Below: Inspired by the false Marie, the workers rampage through the subterranean machine rooms, smashing the super-scientific devices that keep the city of Metropolis alive. Below right: Though supposedly set in the far-flung future, the sets of Metropolis had a distinct deco feel to them.

Below left: The original ad art for the film credited only director Fritz Lang and scriptwriter Thea Von Harbou.

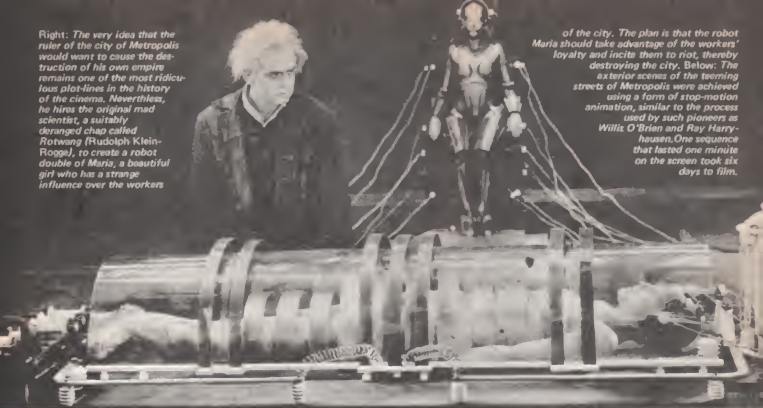




The false Maria (top left) played by Brigitte Helm, an evil robot created in the laboratory of the mad genius Rotwang (top right) incites the workers to destroy the machines that give the city of Metropolis life (above).

Right: The very idea that the ruler of the city of Metropolis would want to cause the destruction of his own empire remains one of the most ridiculous plot-lines in the history of the cinema. Nevertheless, he hires the original mad scientist, a suitably deranged chap called Rotwang (Rudolph Klein-Rogge), to create a robot double of Maria, a beautiful girl who has a strange influence over the workers

of the city. The plan is that the robot Maria should take advantage of the workers' loyalty and incite them to riot, thereby destroying the city. Below: The exterior scenes of the teeming streets of Metropolis were achieved using a form of stop-motion animation, similar to the process used by such pioneers as Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen. One sequence that lasted one minute on the screen took six days to film.



Right: Freder, son of Frederson, experiences the plight of the workers first hand when he changes places with one of them in order to continue his search for Maria. Below: To create the robot, which was eventually transformed into the false Maria, the special effects team made a full body cast of Brigitte Helm. The robot suit was constructed over this cast in a synthetic wood material. The finished suit was articulated at the joints then spray painted to give a metallic finish. Below right: Metropolis was photographed by Karl Freund, who went on to direct Karloff's *The Mummy* (1932). Bottom: "Worth losing a hand for," cried Rotwang, bandishing his mechanical hand under the nose of his employer.



STARBURST CHRISTMAS

In between watching all the great sf movies that will be flooding out of your television set over the Christmas period why not try this quiz, compiled by Alan Murdoch, on your family and friends? Be warned, though the questions may appear to be easy it will take an expert to score anything close to full marks.

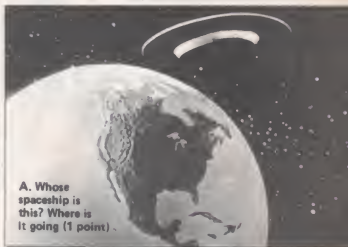
The quiz is divided into three sections: Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced. And as a change of pace, we also include a picture quiz. Most of the questions are compiled from previous issues of Starburst, so if you have been with us since issue 1, you should achieve a respectable score. Of course, there are a few questions that have been plucked out of thin air and are calculated to give even the most astute science fiction film buffs a hard time. The answers are to be found at the end of the quiz.

ELEMENTARY

1. Which film opened with a doctor returning to his home town to discover his friends, relatives and patients were not quite themselves? (1 point)
2. Who was "bombed out in space with a spaced-out bomb"? (1 point)
3. Name the actresses who have partnered Tom Baker's Doctor from the tv series, Doctor Who. (1 point for each)
4. What do Tobor the Great, Gog and The Colossus of New York have in common? (1 point)
5. Things to Come (1934) and Invaders from Mars (1953) were directed by a man who was perhaps better known as a production designer. Name him. (1 point)
6. Who probed the secrets of the Krel? (1 point)
7. From which great fantasy movie does John Boorman's Zardoz derive its title? (1 point)
8. From which films are the following catchphrases?
 - a) "Keep watching the skies!" (1 point)
 - b) "Klaatu barada nikto" (1 point)
 - c) "You're next! You're next!" (1 point)
9. What is Soylent Green? (1 point)
10. In which film...
 - a) ... were aliens with hypodermic fingernails destroyed by car headlamps? (1 point)
 - b) ... did aliens dissolve when hosed down with seawater? (1 point)
 - c) ... was an alien electrocuted in Westminster Abbey? (1 point)
11. Name the one other film in which the Martian War Machines from George Pal's War of the Worlds (1953) appeared. (1 point)
12. What was the name of the Robinsons' space ship from Lost in Space? (1 point)
13. Apart from War of the Worlds give the titles of three other George Pal science fiction movies. (1 point for each)
14. What distinguished the aliens from the humans in the tv series The Invaders? (1 point)

INTERMEDIATE

15. In which episode of Star Trek did David Soul (of Starsky and Hutch fame) appear? (1 point)
16. Irving Block, co-scnarist of the MGM movie Forbidden Planet (1956), was involved in many other, lesser-known fantasy movies. Name three. (1 point for each)
17. Name the bug that turned the blood of living creatures to dust. (1 point)



A. Whose spaceship is this? Where is it going (1 point)

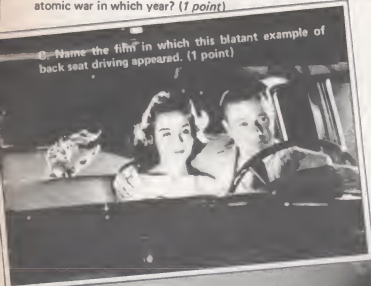
PICTURE QUIZ



B. Name the tall actor, his short friend and the part they played (1 point)

AS QUIZ

18. How many actors have portrayed Professor Bernard Quatermass? (1 point) Name them. (1 point for each)
19. Which fantasy film of the 1940s starred "Mr Joseph Young as himself"? (1 point)
20. Name the actor who appeared in both *This Island Earth* (1955) and *Kronos* (1957). (1 point)
21. Who have the following films in common *The Andromeda Strain*, *Silent Running* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? (1 point)
22. The movie *The Time Machine* predicted there would be an atomic war in which year? (1 point)



C. Name the film in which this blatant example of back seat driving appeared. (1 point)



D. Name the spaceship and the planet it is on. (1 point)



E. From which sf series is this photo? (1 point)



F. What are these men doing? (1 point)

23. Few sf movies of the 1950s managed sequels. One which did was *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957). Give the title of its sequel (1 point)
24. Name the star of the film version of Gore Vidal's *Visit to a Small Planet* (1960) and the character he played. (1 point for each)
25. British films often undergo title changes when seen in America. Give the US titles of the following movies.
 - a) *Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) (1 point)
 - b) *Doppelganger* (1969) (1 point)
 - c) *The Trollenberg Terror* (1958) (1 point)
26. What sort of creatures starred in the following movies?
 - a) *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1 point)
 - b) *Night of the Lepus* (1 point)
 - c) *The Monster that Challenged the World* (1 point)
27. What made *The Incredible Shrinking Man* shrink? (1 point)
28. Name the actress who Married a Monster from Outer Space. (1 point)
29. Dr X (1932) is a classic science fiction whodunnit starring Lionel Atwill in the title role and Fay Wray as his daughter. The question isn't so much whodunnit (but you get 1 point for telling us anyway) or who played the villain (another point) but how it was done (yet another point).
30. Who played the Beast of Yucca Flats (1961)? (1 point)
31. Name the two actresses who played Lois Lane in the tv series *Superman*. (1 point for each)
32. Name the stories on which these films are based.
 - a) *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) (1 point)
 - b) *Last Man on Earth* (1964) (1 point)
 - c) *Charly* (1968) (1 point)
33. Name the different chimps that Roddy McDowall has played. (1 point for each)
34. Give the titles of the serials which featured Commando Cody's flying suit. (1 point for each)
35. In 1940 Albert Dekker starred in an sf movie as a demented scientist who shrunk people to doll size. Name the film (1 point) and the character he played. (1 point)
36. Which song was Hal 9000 taught during programming? (1 point)
37. Though best known as a horror star Lon Chaney Jr.'s first fantasy role was in an sf film in which he was the electrically-charged creation of a mad doctor. Name the film (1 point) and the actor who played the doctor. (1 point)
38. Atop which famous landmark was the Ymir bazooka-shelled into oblivion? (1 point)
39. Who was the captain of the Nautilus? (1 point)

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Dan O'Bannon

-on DARK STAR, STAR WARS, DUNE & ALIEN

Following hot on the heels of our interview, last month, with concept artist on *Alien* Ron Cobb, we present the second and final installment of this mini-series of Alien Interviews. Phil Edwards and Derek Trehan talk to the man who conceived *Alien* and steered it into the early stages of production, Dan O'Bannon.

O'Bannon has been involved in many science fiction projects since his days at the University of Southern California where he met John Carpenter. That meeting led to the filming of *Dark Star*, a cheap but excellent sf comedy (see Starburst 5), since when the two have gone their separate ways.

This interview was conducted before the completion of *Alien* and O'Bannon is a little reticent on the subject, but more than forthcoming on the other projects in which he was involved: *Dark Star*, *Star Wars*, and *Dune*.

Starburst: How did *Dark Star* come about?

O'Bannon: It was conceived in the summer of 1970. John Carpenter and I were both in film school together and he told me he was going to make a short science fiction film for his course. He told me: "It's about four astronauts in a spaceship who go around dropping bombs on suns to prevent them going super

"Carpenter wanted to shoot *Dark Star* in black and white, but I convinced him to do it in colour."

nova". At that time it was called *The Electric Dutchman*. I thought about it a bit and suggested that it be changed to astronauts bombing planets or something. It didn't make sense to blow up something that's going to blow up anyway. I also suggested that there be a fifth crew member, the captain, who's dead, but kept in deep freeze and the others can hook his brain up to a speaker and talk to him.

Originally Carpenter thought that the

bomb that gets struck in the bomb bay should be prised loose with a crowbar. I thought it would be more fun if the bombs were talking bombs. He wanted to shoot it in black and white, but as it got closer to shooting I convinced him that, as it was sf, we should do it in colour.

How did you approach the scripting of the film?

Essentially we didn't have any understanding of script length at all, like how many pages would end up in how many minutes of screen time. We conceptualised a twenty minute film and shot a fifty minute film. John Carpenter and I wrote the script together, a mutual cooking up of ideas. It was also written all through the production because we kept adding stuff as we went along.

Both Ron Cobb and Jim Danforth contributed to the film as well, we believe?

Ron designed the exterior of the *Dark Star* ship and Jim did some paintings. They were used mostly in the title sequence, but also a couple of times in the body of the picture as well. That was real nice of him. He just whipped those up for no charge. We were still in film school at the time. Just before Jim became unhappy with the industry and decided he wouldn't do any more work unless he directed as well. He was still in

his friendly mood then and was good buddies with all the poverty-stricken sf fan film-makers, and he was always doing little favours for people on their projects. We were lucky to meet him and he did these beautiful astronomical paintings for us. He was going to do some other things for us, but at that point he had had enough. It was like a turning point in his life. He had been having more and more frustrating experiences in the industry in that they wouldn't let him direct and then they would botch their end of it making it impossible for him to do the effects properly.

He was getting more and more short-tempered with these films, something I can more and more actively sympathise with. If you have been in this situation and you hear of somebody being like this — you think, "what a prima donna". Then you find yourself in such a situation and you experience the intense personal suffering, creatively, for yourself. However what he did for us was a tremendous favour and helped the picture a great deal, I think.

Dark Star may be basically a student film, but it looks very professional. How did you extend it to a feature?

That control room set I literally built myself. I built the frame out of wood and then had to find all the parts to dress it. In order to get it ready for shooting in time I worked twenty hours a day for two weeks. We had to shoot by a certain time because of equipment availability and John Carpenter had got all his friends to act in it. That was why he had



"Luna swallows a lot of food in one gulp with Star Wars," said O'Banion.



Doc Fahlisch played astronaut Tully, one of the business's early entries in *Dark Star* (1972). Said O'Banion: "All the stuff in the middle of the film about the astronaut's shuttle around the ship and the alien scenes were peddling".

originally approached me. When we got it all done and rough cut, we were looking at it with another student, Jonathan Kalpan. He said that he and a friend of his would put up five thousand dollars a piece to turn it into a feature-length movie. We naively thought we could do it because it had cost us the same amount to get fifty minutes on film and we thought we'd have ten thousand dollars

"If we had taken the short version of *Dark Star* to the commercial market, it would have looked shoddy."

to get forty minutes more. Carpenter and I thought about it. If we padded the film, we destroyed the plot and if we brought the film — as it was — to the commercial market it would look shoddy. Plus, a student film would vanish forever. So we decided to go for a less-than-wonderful feature, because shorts don't get seen by too many people and they don't get you into movies.

What were the elements you added to the short film?

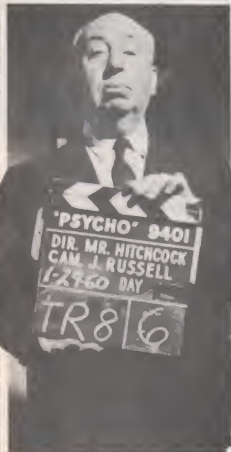
The whole middle. All the stuff with the alien beachball. Basically, if you take the opening up to the point where Doolittle does the diary scene, the whole first bomb run and the title sequence, and then you jump that whole asteroid star sequence and you go up to Talby and Doolittle in the dome. They have a little talk and then you go straight to the scene where they come in for a second bomb run and then the whole end is identical. All the stuff in the middle of the film about the astronauts shuffling around the ship and the alien scenes were padding. One of the problems we had was that by the time we did all that, we had destroyed the sets and it was impossible to duplicate them.

You were so heavily involved in the film's production, did you actually direct any of the movie?

No. On the studio floor Carpenter had complete control.

ON STAR WARS

On Star Wars, your credit is Computer Animation and Graphic Displays. In the



Above: "What I'm trying to do is to establish myself as the Hitchcock of science fiction," remarks O'Bannon.

Right: "I'd like to do a proper hyperdrive sequence. I know how to do it and get a better effect than Star Wars," says O'Bannon.

finished film, what work of yours do we see?

Damn little, because I didn't do that much. Basically, whenever there is a screen with a computer readout on it, that's what I did, and then not all of them. A guy in Chicago named Larry Kuba did some as well. I came into Star

"George Lucas had seen the computer screens in *Dark Star* and asked me if I could do some for *Star Wars*."

Wars very late in production and Lucas just handed me these few ragtag things and asked me if I could do them, and I said, "Yeah, sure". Lucas had also been a student at USC Film School and had done a short there, THX 1138, which he later reshot as a feature. It had a lot of computer screens in it as well, and he

had seen the screens we had done in *Dark Star*, so he asked me if I could do some for *Star Wars*. I didn't really want to do screens to tell the truth. I find it boring. You do one screen and say, "Look at all that neat stuff it does". It becomes difficult to get excited in doing one screen after another. I'm also doing screens on *Alien*, they will be my most ambitious screens ever.

ON THE POST STAR WARS SF BOOM

With *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Superman* and *Alien*, it now seems like big budget sf is a viable proposition as far as the industry is concerned. It reminds me very much of the similar boom in the Fifties. Well, it's not that easy to crank one of these things out, so I think it's going to be hard for it to be a very extensive boom, because it takes a lot of time and money to get one of these big movies off the ground. It's a lot like the disaster movie thing. How many of those did they make? A few only. It all runs in cycles. However I intend to go on making sf when nobody else is. That would be



even better, so the market isn't oversaturated. What I'm trying to do is establish myself as "the Hitchcock of science fiction".

As somebody who is involved and interested in special effects as you are, what were your impressions of Close Encounters?

It's not so much I didn't like it, but I wouldn't call it the ultimate in sf. It's big okay, but no bigger than the big epics of the Fifties like *Ben Hur* or *Ten Commandments*. A spaceship isn't much

bigger! It's obviously technically perfect though, you can't see a glitch anywhere. A lot of people seem to think you can buy perfection with people like Trumbull, who spoke very highly of Spielberg's understanding of effects.

Well, that attitude gets you things like *Damnation Alley* or *Logan's Run*. Zelazny must be boiling over that film. That sound system they used was ludicrous. What did they call it? *Dimension Whoppee* or something. It was just a regular monaural track and every so often you'd get a sputter of stereo from one of the tracks. I thought the drawing for the sound system, *Dimension 360*, was more impressive than the actual effect.

ON INFLUENCES AND THE STATE OF THE ART

What are your thoughts on the films of the past, what has impressed you and what influences do you feel you have assimilated? What kind of things would you like to do in the sf field?

I'd love to do a proper hyperdrive sequence. I know how to do it and get a better effect than *Star Wars*. I'd love to

do the universal zoom, where you start a tracking shot from deep space and in one movement zoom through space down to the surface of a planet and right up to a close up of a face. I've got lots of ideas but to discuss them out of story context seems pointless. Lucas swallowed a lot of ideas in one gulp with *Star Wars*. I wanted to do a scene for a long time of an interplanetary bar with aliens standing around

"It is difficult to get people to back a big budget movie with such a grim story."

drinking, but Lucas beat me to it with the cantina scene in *Star Wars*.

I'd love to do a post-nuclear movie. The first half is the world being destroyed and the second half is what happens after. But it is difficult to get people to back a big budget movie with such a grim story. *What we're doing is trying to get some idea of how you would direct. It really seems to be your greatest ambition from*



Top: "Close Encounters is big, okay, but no bigger than the epics of the fifties like *Ten Commandments*," observes O'Bannon.

Above: Despite the wrangles over who actually scripted *Alien* (opinions vary: The Screen Writers Guild and O'Bannon say O'Bannon did, Walter Hill and David Giler say they did) none can dispute that O'Bannon originated the concept.

all the conversations we've had.

Right. Visual influences would definitely come from Kubrick and Hitchcock. The creating of suspense on the screen and the technique of surprise. Mike Nicholls is also very interesting, particularly his early films, though he is clearly derivative himself. Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* is the original model for the Bond films, I think. The *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was good. It really worked on the emotions, awful things were happening. Conflict is what it's all about. The audience wants blood, whether it be real blood or the emotional blood of conflict. That's what I didn't like about *Close Encounters*. Once it was established that the aliens were benign the threat was taken away, so Spielberg tried to inject conflict with all that stuff about the poison gas.

Sound systems seem to be playing a large role in the presentation of films these days. Apart from your comments on Damnation Alley, have you any thoughts on the matter?

Well it was fine to use Sensurround for an earthquake. It worked less well in *Rollercoaster*, but for a war movie like *Midway* it was effective. A war movie with a

"Ron Cobb had the idea to set off a false atom bomb in the hills outside Los Angeles."

regular stereo track for the bulk of the picture which just uses Sensurround for the major explosions, that could be good. I'd use that for the destruction of the world scenes. Create a huge model of San Francisco and with the right chemicals create a fireball to obliterate it. Ron Cobb had an idea for setting off a false atom bomb in the hills outside Los Angeles. Just after they test the warning system they have you let off this terrific explosion and you get this enormous fake fire ball billowing up in the hills.

It would make Welles' War of the Worlds broadcast look silly. Would you ever actually do it?

Not now that it's made public.

Well, we won't tell anybody.

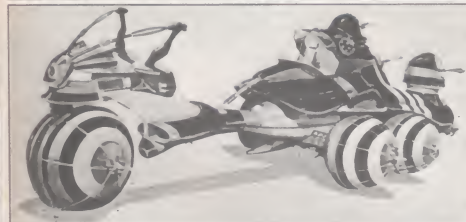
Print it!

ON STOP MOTION ANIMATION

You told us previously that the monster in Alien will be either a man in a suit or it will be mechanical. Have you thought of using stop motion animation?

I'm very familiar with the process, though I've never done any myself. They don't like it in Hollywood now because it strobos. They say it doesn't look realistic and people won't buy it. What they don't realise is that people don't care about that. What they care about is the





Opposite top: "In *Mighty Joe Young* that Ape was given a personality, and so you came to like it as a person," points out O'Bannon. Opposite below: "When you can identify with an animated creature you don't care whether it strobos or not," says O'Bannon. King Kong (1933).

Above: A design drawing for the aborted *Dune* project (recently revived by Dino de Laurentiis) by H. R. Giger. Left: A Chris Foss design for Leto's car, from the O'Bannon *Dune* film.

character or the thing that is being animated. In *Mighty Joe Young* for example, that ape was given a personality, and so you came to like it as a person. When you can identify with an animated creature you don't care whether it strobos or not. Ray Harryhausen did that film with *Willis O'Brien* and it is really good. So's *King Kong*. That is a great film and is right up there with *Citizen Kane*, a real classic. A lot of Harryhausen's creatures lack character. They're all flying demons and dinosaurs: they just become enemies, so you just end up looking at the animation as *animation*. It also depends on whether the thing you are animating is rigid to start with, like the bronze giant in *Jason* and the *Argonauts* or the crab in *Mysterious Island*. They move stiffly to start with so it doesn't matter so much as

with soft-skinned creatures. I still think animation can be appropriate though. I think Danforth's is the smoothest stop-motion work of all.

"We had Giger, Moebius, Chris Foss and Ron Cobb all working on designs for the *Dune* project."

ON DUNE

*You were working on the preproduction of *Dune* in France. Why did the project collapse?*

I was never privy to the discussions, but

basically what happened was that the financiers got cold feet and backed out. It was going to be a good film and they would have made a lot of money out of it, but that's the way it goes sometimes. *How far had the project got?*

Oh, completed all preproduction and the whole film was designed and a million dollars had been spent. We had Giger on it, Moebius, Chris Foss, and Ron Cobb was to come onto the project as designer and general creative thinker.

*Well, they have all contributed to *Alien* now in some capacity. It is interesting to see some of Giger's paintings and Foss's for *Dune*.*

If you look at the Foss paintings you can still see what the film would have looked like overall. It really was going to be that colourful and fabulous.

STARBURST LETTERS

So much mail have we received after John Brosnan's review of *Alien* (Starburst 14) that we decided to devote an entire letters column to your views.

Having just returned from seeing *Alien* I read your review in Starburst 14 and I would like to make a few comments myself.

The impression I got was that the Alien was a nature, rather than a company-created, creature. I believe the crashed alien ship was a victim of The Alien. The skeleton in this ship had a hole in the chest, suggesting that it died in the same way as Kane. The distress call was later decoded by Mother, Nostromo's computer, and found to be a warning, presumably left by the dead creature. How the Company knew of these events and what they wanted The Alien for is beyond me.

I agree with your comments about the omission of the scene where Ripley destroys the cocooned Brett and Dallas. Indeed I am grateful to learn, through your review, what The Alien was doing with the bodies.

With regard to the scientific inaccuracies mentioned, there has to be some sort of sound when space action is taking place, to hold the audience's attention. It might as well be the sound of a rocket engine as Thus Spake Zarathustra in 2001. The presence of gravity, like the presence of sound is a piece of necessary artistic licence. By the way there was a reference to the ship's artificial gravity being switched on just after the Nostromo has left the planet's surface.

H. Gordon Steele, Slyn, Lancs.

While I broadly agree with John Brosnan's remarks on *Alien*, and am grateful for the information about the original concept of the Alien as a genetic experiment carried out by the company (a good sf promise), I must take issue on a couple of points.

Firstly, he remarks about sounds being heard, and shock waves felt, in space. Yes, I know sound and explosions are silent and wave-less in the vacuum of space, but consider the cinematic effect of a silent soundtrack as

the "Nostromo" flies over your head. Much of the impact of the ship's size as it thunders above you derives from the loud Dolby soundtrack which almost literally shakes you in your seat. (Some of this impact is going to be lost in smaller theatres around the country, I know.)

All the sounds you hear, ship's engines firing, Kane's body being ejected, etc come under the (valid) excuse of cinematic licence. It's all very well for sf buffs (and I count myself in that category) to point out such scientific inaccuracies, but science fiction has to get to make some compromises for cinematic success, at least in the popular cinema. (Face facts again, 20th Century-Fox wouldn't have put up the vast amounts of money for the film if they didn't think it was going to be a popular success, would they? And without that money, we wouldn't have had effects that are largely successful, highly atmospheric sets, good acting, excellent directing, etc...) . . .

Secondly, and this is a minor point, Mr Brosnan remarks that there is no mention of artificial gravity to account for the "normalcy" of life aboard the ship in space . . . well there is! If he cares to cast his mind back to the point where the "Nostromo" re-enters orbit after taking off from the planet, one of the crew (I think it's Ripley, but I could be wrong) mentions something to the effect that "artificial gravity has been engaged".

By and large, I agree with Mr Brosnan's points that the missing "cocoon" scene is a major plot flaw, and I think that any advantage that is gained in pacing the film is lost in the gap in the scientific detail that Allen Dean Foster has provided in his novelization would have slowed the film, but would have been welcome in terms of giving the film a more scientific credibility and 'feel'.

However, unlike the novelization, I think the editing style improves the story. The film has gaps, (like that in which Kane is heeled back out of the egg chamber and back to the "Nostromo") which improves the effect on the audience. The scene in the film where Bratt is captured by the adult form, is played out to greater effect than in the novel — even knowing what was to come, I found myself becoming increasingly nervous as this scene elapsed in the movie, and shocked (as well as fascinated) by the creature's first appearance.

Another incident which voices the film as an improvement on the novel, is the alien's capture of Dallas in the ventilation system, which is one of the most brilliant moments of suspenseful cinema I have ever seen. The fact of seeing the creature in its entirety looming over the captain for a single split second is an unexpectedly shocking moment.

One final comment I must make in praise of the film is the point when Ripley backs into the shuttle craft and, through the strobe-lighting, sees the creature. Perhaps this is one of the points where (and here I agree with John Brosnan again) we see rather too much of the creature, but in this instance at least, I feel the atmosphere carries it through.

Finally, I would like to say that, overall, the film is a big success. It is the closest I have yet seen to translated to the big screen, and the most atmospheric production certainly. It's horrific elements work very well indeed (even though they're not novel in any sense).

Rob Frampton, Canterbury, Kent.

Good old *Alien* is here at last! And it isn't at all bad! Everyone loves John Hurt's death! And Ash's last gasp! By Jove, yes! And I confess, Ridley Scott has knocked together a fair dinkum

hunk of celluloid. So let us pause . . .

Some would call it a return to the Middle Ages: this new wave of viscera meets a demand for "stronger stuff" from a hardened audience; blood 'n' guts is making a come-back. American TV audiences have seen an execution — by firing-squad; most of us saw the horrifying murder of the American newsmen in South America. But what really followed? We see a man shot in cold blood, and no one reacts; we say "That's awful!" and try to ignore it. Yet faked death is ever-popular: and the more vicious and bloodier it is, the better we like it. Are we really immune to the suffering of our fellow men?

I think so. The Romans had The Amphitheatre; we have the cinema. The hideous contests which the Romans watched are now said to be decadent; but have you ever heard a Romero fan rave on? Phantasm's silver ball, with its skull-driller, is also popular; yet the effect is revolting. Cronenberg's *Shivers*, Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, and Grau's *Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue* contain scenes which could be called pornographic, if violence were as unpopular as sex in the cinema. Anyway, Lenny Bruce said all this before, in plain language, so I'll call it a day.

My point (at last) is that something must be wrong with us all to want to see intestines hurtling all over the place. Will "breed and circuses" be our last words?

No: but I don't care that much either; otherwise, this would be a rational, intelligent, sophisticated letter.

Simon Cunningham, London W6.

John Brosnan's review of *Alien* in issue 14 was up to his usual high standard, although I must disagree with him about the "scientific inaccuracies" which the film contains. Mr Brosnan complains about hearing sounds in space, and about the lifeboat being

FANTASY THREE FROM LSP

buffeted by the shock-wave caused by the destruction of the "Nostromo". While being scientifically inaccurate, I maintain that these are cinematically correct, as they are designed to heighten the audio-visual impact of the events taking place on the screen.

Mr Brosnan also complains about the makers of the film ignoring the problem of lack of gravity in space, and comments, "there's not even a mention of that old gimmick - artificial gravity". In fact it is mentioned. When the Nostromo is lifting from the planetoid to rejoin the refinery, Captain Dallas instructs Ripley to engage artificial gravity - so there!

While on the subject of *Alien* - which I enjoyed very much, I would like to ask readers if I am the only one who felt in retrospect that something was missing? By this I mean that I had the impression that though cleverly edited, I got the feeling that a lot of footage was excised at the final cut, and that some scenes, especially the "chestburster" were toned down radically. Perhaps a case of the film's backers getting cold feet at the last minute?

Scott McSkimming, East Kilbride, Scotland.

We are only sorry that we couldn't include more of your comments of Alien, which is certainly one of the most controversial films of recent months. Our regular letters page will return next month. In the meantime, send all your comments and criticisms to:

Starburst Letters,
Marvel Comics Ltd,
Jadwin House,
205-211 Kentish Town Road,
London, NW5.

COMIC MART NOTICE

Due to unforeseeable circumstances, the advertisement for the Titan Distributors COMIC MART appeared in Starburst 16 (last month) with the wrong date. The next COMIC MART will be held on:

SATURDAY JANUARY 19th 1980

not January 3rd as stated. Starburst apologises for any inconvenience caused.



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FINAL COUNTDOWN

STARBURST LOOKS AT A TIME TRAVEL MOVIE WITH A DIFFERENCE, WHICH WILL STAR KIRK DOUGLAS. EXCLUSIVE REPORT BY TONY CRAWLEY.

I don't know about you, but I'm getting more than choked with the proliferation of copycat Star Wars movies and tv spectaculars. I'm fed up with hearing about them, reporting them as *Things to Come* items, seeing them (worst of all), and—more often than not—reviewing them. I mean, how many ways can you write: *Just another George Lucas rip-off, with doubles for Luke, Leia, Han, Darth Vader and the robots...*

Put it another way, since when was science fiction only about inter-galactic warfare?

Good news on the horizon, therefore. Don Taylor, director of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *Damien—Omen II*, has a most intriguing big movie (10 million dollars) underway right now aboard the USS Nimitz, the five billion dollar pride of the US fleet.

The film is *The Final Countdown*, a poor title and due for a change, I'm sure. It says nothing of the bizarre fantasy plot which sends this gigantic, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the most advanced vessel in the US Navy today, back in time to December 7, 1941... the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour.

Kirk Douglas heads the cast, straight from his first brush with sf in *Saturn 3*. His son, Peter Vincent Douglas produces, a family tradition these days, since brother Michael's success with *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The China Syndrome*.

Also cast: Martin Sheen, James Farentino and Robert Culp. This, of course, is Sheen's year, starring in Coppola's stunning *Apocalypse Now* in the cinema and *Blind Ambition* on tv.

The real star of the film, however, is the Nimitz itself. No model carriers in this movie. They're using the real thing. At 1200 feet it's longer than the Eiffel Tower is high. The ship has 32 stories, housing 6000 men. With its nuclear reactors it can cruise for 13 years without refuelling, while its sophisticated jet aircraft can penetrate 85% of the Earth's surface.

"There are only three Nimitz class carriers in the world," says Executive Producer Richard St Johns. "They cost 4½ billion dollars and have 1½ billion dollars-worth of equipment aboard, including 94 aircraft. We're shooting on the Nimitz, but we don't control it, of course. They permit us to film what they're doing. We tell them what we need. They then tell us roughly when they'll be doing it. We need sixteen plane launches—okay, the training schedule has plane launches on the morning of June 11. So we change our schedule to suit their schedule. For instance, they're on training

manoeuvres in the Caribbean between certain dates. That fitted in nicely for us... because that's when they were going!"

The movie opens in 1980, during routine exercises. The meteorologist sees a smudge on the NASA weather satellite photos. He ignores it. Probably a speck of dirt on the camera lens. Not so. Soon enough the weather is kicking up.

"Sir, I don't like it," he tells Kirk Douglas. "Every indication shows clear, sharp and calm air, yet we've got gusts of wind blowing from every direction. Even the damn barometer is giving incorrect readings. It reads like a sun flare, but it's now developing an vortex. I've never seen anything quite like it."

Now models and sets are used for the first time, as the sky fills with bright luminous flashes of lightning. The Nimitz is bathed in an unearthly green glow and suffers a momentary loss of gravity. The crew loses their footing and fell all over the place—clutching their ears in pain as a crescendo of high-frequency noises overwhelms the vessel...

Skipper Douglas can see his carrier is on a collision course with another carrier. His warning scream can't be heard. He closes his eyes, awaiting the crunch. Nothing! Suddenly, The lights stop. The noise stops. The sea is calm. The other ship is gone. Everything reverts to normality. They're still on correct course, 200 miles west of Pearl Harbour.

So what happened? A nuclear strike perhaps? No, the instant radiation check is negative. No shockwaves either. Then comes the call from Communications:

"Skipper, we're picking up some weird signals."

Dover the ship's public address system, every one hears the day's news headlines: "For the first time, the Germans appear to have suffered some reverses in the Russian campaign. In North Africa, Tobruk is still holding out against the forces of Field Marshal Rommel."

Next Captain Kirk (hel) receives the photographs from the reconnaissance planes he sent up after the storm. One shows Pearl Harbour with the Pacific fleet at anchor. Good. But... there's the battleship Arizona. Impossible! The Arizona was sunk on December 7, 1941.

The shattering truth dawns. The Nimitz has moved back in time...

"Einstein's Theory of Relativity," says producer St Johns, as if that were explanation enough. "That's the base of all time warp theory, though time is viewed differently by Asimov, Heinlein, Sturgeon, by the various writers who've written on time in a science

fiction sense.

"It's an accident—the crew don't know what sent them back. They don't know where they are for twenty minutes of the film. They've come out of the storm and all communications have ceased. They're no longer in touch with Pearl Harbour, with Washington, with the satellites. They do a complete scan of all communications bands, which they have the equipment to do, and they pick up a broadcast coming out of Honolulu—it's a speech by Franklin Roosevelt. They pick up an entertainment channel—and it's Tommy Dorsey's band with Frank Sinatra. They wonder why all these old things are being broadcast in 1980. Except it's not 1980 any more."

Now the captain of the Nimitz has a dilemma on his hands. You don't have to be an expert on Einstein's theories to realise if the Nimitz enters the war and wipes out the Japanese attack force with its superior fire-



power, it might destroy itself. Work it out: No attack on Pearl Harbour equals no war between America and Japan. No war equals no A-bomb being rapidly invented to end such a war. No A-bomb might therefore equal no nuclear power in use by 1980. No nuclear power... no Nimitz.

Some dilemma...

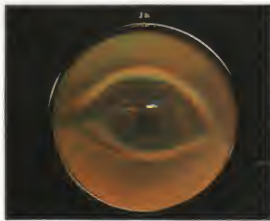
"Well, obviously since the attack occurred," smiles St Johns, "they don't change history. But the how and why they don't—that's our movie."

Or it is now. The original story had a World



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THE STARBURST INTERVIEW

MATT IRVINE

THE CRAFT OF SPACE

Mat Irvine is one of the BBC's top visual effects designers. He's worked on *Dr Who*, *Blake's 7* and other fantasy series as well as science fact programmes such as *The Sky at Night*, *Tomorrow's World* and *Horizon*. John Fleming went to the BBC's Visual Effects base in Acton to find out about some of the techniques he uses and how he got into the business.



Left: The *Tomorrow's World* space shuttle. Above: Mat Irvine poses with his model deep-space shuttle (see page 28 of *Tomorrow's World*, Volume 1, Number 1, 1981). The second series of *Tomorrow's World* (1982) was the first to feature a "flash" (a bright light) in the background. Above: A model of the *Tomorrow's World* space shuttle.



Like many people, Mat Irvine got into visual effects by sheer chance: "I didn't know what I wanted to do," he told me. "I still don't. I never have, really."

He was working for BBC-TV news on photographic research, which involved a certain amount of model photography: "Stuff on space items that wasn't available. I still do it to a certain extent." After 2½ years doing this, he moved into Visual Effects. *Dr Who* and spectacular explosions, right? Wrong.

He worked on visual effects for the Open University programmes, produced

by the BBC at Alexandra Palace. "It was extremely good training," he says, "especially for working fast and accurately. You had to work to — I won't say the nearest thou — but the nearest sixteenth of an inch, otherwise you could ruin somebody's mathematical demonstration."

"The first thing I did was work with Ian Scoones on *Dr Who*."

From Alexandra Palace, he moved down to the BBC's main Visual Effects base. At the time, he was the youngest Visual Effects Assistant ever appointed.

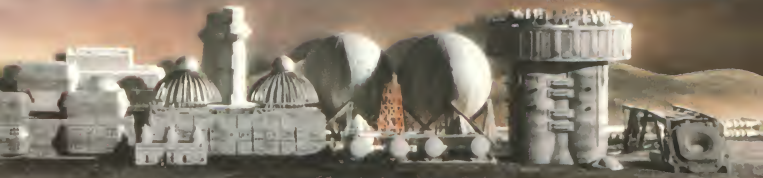
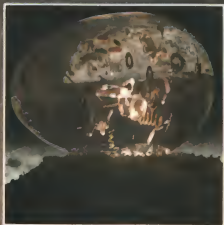
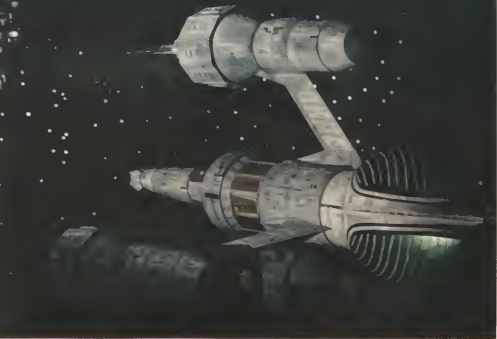
"I've a feeling the first thing I actually did down here," he told me, "was working with Ian (Scoones, effects

designer) on *Dr Who*. At the time, he was doing it on his own — which nowadays is unthinkable — the entire set of four episodes. I only did a little bit. I remember fitting a light inside the TARDIS and making it flash" (in the *Curse of Fenella* story).

One reminder of his work on another *Dr Who* story sits in a corner of Mat Irvine's office. It is large and black and hairy.

"That's Boris," he told me. "I nicked the name from the *Who* song Boris the Spider. The last episode of Jon Pertwee's series (of *Dr Who*) was called *Planet of the Spiders* and we had what seemed like hundreds of the things. I think we had about thirty of them. We had dummy spiders and we had a queen spider with legs that moved via 15 cables connected

Below: *The Liberator* hovers close to a city in space. From *Blake's 7*. Right: *Spaceworld* from the second series of *Blake's 7*.



to a system of levers under the spider's body; we had puppet spiders worked by puppeteers and we had Boris. And, you see, Boris would work by himself. Motor and batteries. He used to run along the floor. He runs on a three-wheel meccano gear. In our usual fashion, we build a prototype and think we'll later build a

Pure science is an area that interests Mat Irvine.

production model, precision-made. We never get round to doing it. So Boris is still a prototype of wood and meccano gears, sprocket chain and bearings of dubious quality. The motor drives the middle set of legs like oars; the rear set of legs flap up and down on bits of elastic; the chain turns the rear wheels which are actually driving him along; and his front



wheels can't stop him in a breeze or what ever. He didn't quite get as far as being radio-controlled. We thought that would be going a bit far. I've always kept him and he's gone round to conventions with me and even straightforward astronomy talks. I give him a service every now and then and I've run him up the road about one o'clock in the morning, despite the neighbours' funny looks.¹²

After five years as an assistant, Irvine became a fully-fledged Visual Effects Designer, again, the youngest ever appointed at that time. His first programme was Nigel Calder's eight-part science spectacular *The Whole Universe Show*. Pure science is an area that interests Mat Irvine.

Model work is not only a vital part of



Top: Mat Irvine can build a spaceship out of anything, including hair dryers! Above: The TARDIS and Erato's Eggship from the The Creature from the Pit episode of Dr Who.

his job, it's his hobby too. He has written regular articles for *Scale Models* magazine on a variety of subjects including skylab, the Space Shuttle and the tv programme *Spaceships of the Mind*. He is a member of the British Interplanetary Society and, with fellow-BIS member David Baker, has written a book on the shuttle (*Space Shuttle*, pub: New Cavendish, £1.95).

Spaceships of the Mind was another Nigel Calder programme which consisted mainly of scientists' realistic but unfulfilled fantasies — scientific fiction realised by Mat Irvine, who created about 35 separate model designs for the show. One which particularly interested him was the starship proposed by the British Interplanetary Society for their Project Dædalus. Although individual functions had been studied in detail, no one had designed the actual ship itself until he worked on *Spaceships of the Mind*.

Most of his designs for the show had to be futuristic within a known technological framework. One concept was a mite fanciful, though. It was the idea of American professor Theodore Taylor:



"It's called a Santa Claus Machine", Irvine explained. "It's a machine which can literally dig up the surface it's sitting on — a moon, an asteroid or whatever — process that soil into its constituent elements and literally stow them in pigeonholes. Then, when you want to build something, it takes all the things and builds you anything you like — fridges, washing machines and more Santa Claus Machines. They're self-replicating machines. We came up with this idea of combining the elements and putting it into an egg. So we had a Santa Claus Machine Egg. We also had a craft called an Eggship, which looked a bit like a beetle with big spindly legs and a great

"Arthur C. Clarke's space ship caught us out!"

big head and it was very alien-looking. It was the only non-technological bit — I went a bit overboard on it — and it carried the egg cradled underneath."

Another craft for the same show was Arthur C. Clarke's concept for a solar sailing ship: a spaceship with sails several miles wide, driven by solar winds. "That caught us out effects-wise," Mat Irvine told me. "Its sails were so immense and you would need such tiny threads to hold things together. It was possible on a model but it caught us out, given the time we had, and so we ended up with a graphic."

The BBC Graphics Department at Television Centre in Shepherd's Bush is physically separate from Visual Effects at Acton but, with the Scenic Design, Costume and Make-up departments, they all come under BBC Design Group. Television production is a team effort. No one works in absolute isolation, everyone's work interconnects with everyone else's and, as Mat Irvine told me: "On something like *Spaceships of the Mind*, you'll find the Effects Designer and the Graphics Designer will work very, very closely together."

The same goes, of course, for liaison with the Electronic Effects Operators (EEOs), who work for the Engineering

Many BBC departments are linked under "Design".

Department and who handle effects produced electronically rather than physically or on film. Mat Irvine explains: "They are the electronic equivalent of us, basically. There's only three at the BBC and, in something like *Blake* or *Dr Who*, our liaison with the electronic effects guys is very vital."

Scenic Design Department is equally important: "A heck of a lot of the stuff that we do is linked with them," Irvine says. "Scenic often have to build an item which is full-size and then we build a model of it." The BBC also has a Plastics Workshop which mainly produces fibreglass mouldings for Scenic Design but it can also supply materials for Visual Effects. And then, of course, there is the cross-fertilization of monsters for *Dr Who*.

"Well," says Irvine, "Monsters are one of those nebulous fields that are a cross-over between us and other design departments. Most monsters end up humanoid



Above, left and opposite below: A selection of space crafts designed or built by Mat Irvine.

because most actors are humanoid-shaped and you've usually got an Equity member inside the suit. If you have a blob monster and the blob's going to have somebody inside it, you've got to liaise with Costume. If the face is featured, you liaise with Make-Up as well. If it's a blob that's not humanoid, it's usually back down to Effects. In one *Dr Who* (*The Seeds of Doom*) there was the Krynoid which developed from seeds, which were Effects. Then they inhabited a body and you had a (monster) suit, which was Costume. Then when the thing had fully-grown, it was back to Effects again and models.

Although all Visual Effects models are designed inside the BBC, not all are actually built there. As Mat Irvine told me: "We have to sub-contract to a certain extent because we physically just do not have enough people or space to do them. We seem to be a growth area. We've got more and more people and more space and we're still overloaded with work. Stuff has to go out."

For example, the original *Liberator* in

Blake's 7 (designed by Ian Scoones) was built outside the BBC. And, talking about *Blake* brought up another point. I asked Mat Irvine about a very odd shot which had appeared several times in *Blake's 7*. It appeared to be a two-dimensional photograph of the *Liberator* with a zoom lens used to show the craft speeding away.

Irvine told me: "In the first series, there were some shots done by animation because of time. I think some animations from the first series may have got into the second series. But we tried to get enough standard shots done for the second series: *Liberator* travelling left-right away from camera/towards camera/fast/slow.

"Sometimes you just don't have time.

"I had a problem on the second series of *Blake*."

Some things are literally thrown together or modified from old craft. I had that problem with the second series. I don't know if anyone actually knew what they were letting themselves in for when *Blake* was devised. In the first series, Ian (Scoones) started on it and flogged his guts out on it silly — one effects designer for all 13 episodes — all the filming, the model filming, the studios, the stock props, all the guns, everything. And they realised half way through it was silly and dragged another effects designer onto it, which happened to be me. So I was only really involved for half the time. When the second series came round, I stayed on it, Ian came off it and two other effects designers came on. What we did — and this is fairly unusual because we don't normally specialise — we did split ourselves up. I did all the model work all the way through. I did a couple of studios, that's all. The other two designers — Peter Pegrum and Andy Lazell — did the live locations and the rest of the studios.

"The budget for the second series of *Blake* was virtually double the first one. And the budget for the third series is double the second, but (effects designers) Steve Drewett and Jim Francis are having just as many problems as we did.

"We built spacecraft out of virtually everything!"

The final episode of the second series gave Mat Irvine one of his biggest headaches. The *Liberator* joined forces with Federation craft to combat an alien force.

"We had the problem," he explained to me, "of showing the terrestrial craft of the Federation and an alien craft in the form of the *Liberator* and these alien alien craft. This mass of aliens approaching. How the hell do you illustrate those? We built craft out of virtually everything. Washing-up bottles. Going way back to the way we used to do it — very few kit parts were actually used. We had hair-dryer bodies and the lot. Looking back on it, I wonder. Working in a television screen format, it's very dangerous to get too much, especially miniature-wise, into one picture. It's better to have great big close-ups of the *Liberator* and perhaps one other craft or planet rather than to try and get everything in. But I had about forty alien craft plus the *Liberator*. Even on a 26" screen it's going

to get a bit lost. Looking back on it, I think I should have done the alien craft all of the same design or a very similar type of design, but they were all completely different designs and colours."

Television is often a matter of compromise and knowing what you can get away with, as Mat Irvine explains: "It would be very nice to do complex manoeuvres of the Liberator, Star Wars-Galactica style. But you'd get one shot a day if you're lucky, especially if you were doing double-passes with cameras and especially if you were involving travelling-matte or blue-screen process, which we

"It's cheating, but it was the only way."

just haven't got time for — because you're then involving lab time as well. So you have to rely on Liberator travelling in straight lines.

"I involved a lot of front-axial projection on the second series of Blake. Because many of the scripts called for Liberator to approach Planet X. It's going to take time to set a model up — if it's being 'flown' or if it's on a pole or whatever. Moving it and lighting it's going to take the time. It's easier to change the background plate on a projector. So we used to set the Liberator up and light it and get the movement correct and I had a number of paintings done by David Hardy, probably the top astronomical artist in this country. If I said I wanted a binary star system, he'd produce the lighting to match it and he produced me over a dozen different planets, which I then photographed as slides so we could project them. We set the Liberator up, we'd project one of David's planets and film that, wind the Liberator back, change the slide and do it again. Okay, it's cheating, but it was the only way to get the shots through.

"I've also done multiple passing camera: three times winding back. You've really got to use 35mm (film) for that. We usually can't afford 35mm, but sometimes we do. If you are winding back, the mechanisms of 35mm are a bit steadier

"You've got to trust luck a lot of the time."

than 16mm. You've got more sprocket holes per frame to make sure the thing doesn't actually jump. Even so, you've got to trust to luck a lot of the time. The Mitchell (camera) we were using needed one motor to run forward at high speed and another motor to wind it backwards. And then you had to remember to put the motor on which was a 24 volt DC one and then we had a 240 AC one to run it forwards and everything had to be done every time in exactly the right way to get these three passes. And if you wanted to do another take, you had to start all over again.

"The only way we can do lab-type effects (ie: effects put onto the film in the film laboratories) is to involve electronics, which means taking a piece of film into the electronic studio — into the electronic (control) gallery, to be more precise — or two pieces of film, maybe one shot against an 'overlay' colour and

put them together electronically. (The technique is roughly similar to the blue-screen technique used in feature films.) It's quicker — much quicker — than the film lab can do it. And, if it's not right, you can re-run it and do it again until you get it right. A lot of the bits and pieces for Blake were done like that — not only the model side but things like gun effects. Although you try to avoid gun effects. Do it once to show you can do it and don't do it again because it all takes time to set the thing up — whether you're setting up a charge in a Federation gun or a hit or you're producing a (laser) beam. We tried to avoid using beams because they're so time-consuming to set up. I think in the first series there's just one episode where we used a beam. We did it electronically by an inlay desk with the Electronic Effects Operator.

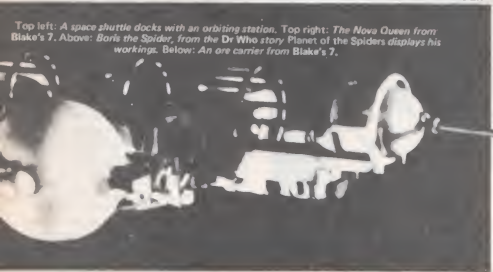
"It would be nice to have our own electronic camera (at Acton) and it may come. But there's still a basic problem with electronics: you can't run electronic camera at high-speed. Nobody has yet developed a production version of a high-speed scanning camera. You can have a high-speed video recorder. No problem. But the electronic camera will only scan at a standard speed and the electronic

image has to go onto tape at the normal speed.

"We need high-speed cameras. Say we're flying a model on wires. The movement of the model is not going to be genuine because the model is so small — even the large Liberator model is not that big. So one wants to slow the movement of the model down and the only way to do that is to run the camera fast. Television moves at 25 frames a second. If you've got a large model and you just want to slow it down a bit, you can run at 50 frames — double speed — so that, when it's projected at 25, you've got twice the amount of frame time and the model's at half the speed. Generally, the smaller the model, the faster you have to move it. So, when you get tiny models, you're running up to three times the speed — or four or five times, but then you run into camera problems, because cameras don't like running that fast.

I think the 16mm Mitchell will just about go up to five times speed. If we're going faster, especially if we're using miniature explosions, we're into an industrial camera called a Locam, which is just like a little white box with a lens on the front of it. It's technically a fairly sophisticated camera because it gets up to





Top left: A space shuttle docks with an orbiting station. Top right: The Nova Queen from Blake's 7. Above: Boris the Spider, from the Dr Who story Planet of the Spiders displays his workings. Below: An ore carrier from Blake's 7.

500 frames a second virtually instantaneously. Probably in pure cinematograph context it's not a very good camera to use, but it's literally the only one we've got to use. All the miniature explosions for Blake are filmed with a Locam. The Liberator explosion at the end (of series one). The Federation pursuit ship blowing up in episode 12. The explosion on the space wheel at Federation headquarters. They were all done on a Locam.

"Our explosions are just miniature versions of larger explosions. Smaller quantities used in slightly different ways. But explosions, like water and flames, don't know they're meant to be miniaturized. Consequently, you've got to high-speed them. If you think a Locam with the film galloping through the (film) gate at 500 frames a second, it's actually 20 times normal speed. And you can get quite a

"Always, potentially, there is a danger with explosives."

nice slow explosion which lasts quite a nice length of time, especially if you've got little explosions going off virtually simultaneously. By the time they're spread out at 20 times speed, you've got BANG - BANG - WHOOMP! Using a mixture of small quantities of the usual type of effects explosives and things like titanium metal (and certain other commonly-available substances) you only have to use very, very tiny quantities of each of them to get what is, in effect, a very big explosion - because you're using a very small model. I don't know how much we should go into explosives here. You have to have a Home Office licence. It's one field which is the prerogative of the professionals rather than the amateurs, because it can obviously be very dangerous. Always, potentially, there is a danger. We may sometimes fool about in our work, but never when it comes to pyrotechnics.

"Our work's never boring. It may drive us mad sometimes and we go screaming round the place shouting, but you can never say it's boring. Not enough time, not enough money, not enough materials of the right type. But never boring."

THINGS TO COME

Starburst's ever-popular news column looks at what is new and what is upcoming in the worlds of television and cinema science fiction. Compiled by Tony Crawley.

DUNE...

... is busting out all over. Ridley Scott, the *Alien* man, has been signed to direct the *Dino de Laurentiis* film of Frank Herbert's classic sci tale. But not just yet awhile. Shooting can't begin until well into 1981. Scott has to make *Knight* first for EMI. On the *Dino Dune* film, de Laurentiis will take a back seat and act as executive producer. Scott will be both director and producer — with his partner Ivor Powell as co-producer. The first film plans for the Harbert stories fell through years ago, when the Chilean exile Alexandro Jodorowsky was going to direct. Dan O'Bannon was connected with the project and H.R. Giger was set to be the designer... explains Giger's connection with *Alien*. Ridley Scott, of course, is the latest blue-eyed boy of the movie industry. At the last count, his *Alien* had earned 87 million dollars around the world since its May 25 premiere. That means about 48 million dollars for the coffers of 20th Century-Fox. Plus a few bob for Ridley, I'm sure.

be expected as the producer of the *Surfer* project is one Lee Kremer. He's *Olivia Newton-John's* manager. He's also her fiancée. His suggestion that she should be in the movie could, however, be the reason he's having difficulty raising the scratch. He has a shooting date set in July in Britain and Los Angeles. So far, though, he's only collected half of the required 25 million dollar budget. Incidentally, most of that loot comes from British sources. Private investors and presumably Marvel freaks every last one of them.

Once the money is fully in hand, or safe, the movie will become a fifty-fifty deal with the Marvel Comic Group. Stan Lee — who else? — has already drafted the first script. Lee Kremer wants it re-written. He's after bags more special effects. And he's also wanting scope for lots of music. Mmm. Tell you more, tell you more when I have it...

Until then, why not drop me a postcard with your suggestion for the actor who you feel would make the best, the definitive *Silver Surfer*. Sten's space-born apostle. Remember how Sten the Men sees him: "a certain nobility in his demeanour, an almost spiritual quality in his aspect and his bearing... There seemed something biblically pure about our *Silver Surfer*, something totally selfless and magnificently innocent... someone who would graphically represent all the best, the most unselfish, qualities of intelligent life."

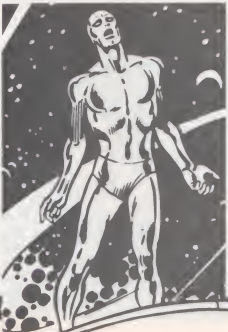
All this was, as Sten wrote in his *Sons of Origins* book, a tall order to fill. It still is. But let's have your views; just keep them sane, if you will.



SHEENA SHINES

Superman, Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, The Incredible Hulk, *Capt America*, and next year *Terry and the Pirates* (see *Things to Come*, Starburst 12) and *The Silver Surfer*... There's just got to be some room for a super-heroine among all these cinematically hot heroes. And Sheena, *Queen of the Jungle* has won the space. Avco Embassy has announced a world-wide talent hunt to find a screen Sheena, now that the obvious choice of Raquel Welch is too old or too actressy for it. One Hollywood whisper said it was Farrah Fawcett's role for the asking.

Then Cheryl Ladd was considered. But, of course, Cheryl is far too short — all the more so in her ridiculous neppy — sized bikinis for *Charlie's Angels*. Maybe there is a new Raquel or Ursula or even a Jena Fonda out there, ready-built to swing the Sheena way. But I doubt it. I rather fancy Avco will play safe and the role will eventually go to their *Goldengirl* star, Susan Anton. She's got all that it takes. She can't act, but then I doubt if the scouts are out searching for a Vanessa or Glende...



BATMAN RETURNS

As the list of comic-book legends turning into cinema and/or tv movie heroes continues to grow, the inevitable has happened. The word is *Batman* is due for a come-back. Whisper it do, for the moment... Everything is very hush-hush, but a certain Hollywood outfit has optioned the screen rights and aims to have a *Batmovie* epic out by the summer of 1981. Whether they're revamping *Batman* and Robin or merely re-camping them is among the secrets

TV'S SUPERMAN

A few readers have queried my exclusive revelation that BBC-TV has bought the *Superman* movie. Apparently, Mrs N.C. Mawston of Newcastle and others contacted the Beeb and, as usually proves the rule, the BBC knew nothing about such a purchase. May I say, I very rarely check anything with the Beeb; it's just a frustrating exercise obtaining the correct office and hinging on the phone while they check and return with their normal comment: "We don't seem to know anything about this..." My information was that the BBC had indeed bought the film. However, in the interests of good reader relations (that's what I'm here for), I've investigated anew and found that since my story appeared (a mere line, actually), some difficulties have in fact arisen. Now it appears that the film is still up for grabs between BBC and ITV. This, no doubt, is something to do with a simple case of "If you buy one, mate, you'll have to buy 'em all". The Salkinds are still promising five *Superman* films in all... even though Chris Reeve is contracted only for I and II. I'll keep a watchful eye (rather than ear) on the situation and report back.

THE SURFER SURFACES

The *Silver Surfer* is movie-bound. That's the good news. *Olivia Newton-John* is slated as the film's female lead. That's the bad news. Who would she play anyway — the brunette Shalle Bal? Such quirky casting thoughts had only to

screen horror. "I turned down *The Omen*," he said in London. "I find this story more interesting. There is the added challenge of playing the Englishman." There is, I gather no truth in the rumour, that Peter Cushing will now take over Chuck Heston's discarded role in the *Rough Mix* western...

NO MORE JAWS

They came up with the scoreline first, but now the game won't be played... *Jaws 3*, *People 0* is off! The idea of merging the *Jaws* movie with the *National Lampoon* tribe has gone badly adrift, due to the usual euphemism of creative differences. As I suggested, the flaw in the plan was trying to match the very funny title. As *Match of the Day* proves every Saturday night, if you know the score, who wants to watch the match? It's also highly debatable if Peter Benchley wanted to see his book's good name treated in such a merciless manner. No matter how much they paid him. And his fee is enormous these days. On *Jaws*, Benchley was paid a mere 750,000 dollars for the rights. On his new film, *The Island*, with Michael Caine, he received... 2,150,000 dollars... and perhaps a promise not to muck about with *Jaws*?

TITANIC

Get your diaries out... June 19, 1981 is the premiere date "in every major city of the world" for Charles H. Schneer's biggest ever movie made with Ray Harryhausen, *Clash of the Titans*. Beverly Cross, Maggie Smith's husband, has adapted the *Perseus* legend for the screen, with Harry Hamlin and swan-necked Judi Bowker as *Perseus* and *Andromeda*. A highly distinguished cast of Burgess Meredith, Maggie Smith, Ursula Andress, Claire Bloom, Sien Phillips, Dame Flora Robson and Lord Olivier help take the MGM film from Schneer and Harryhausen's usual rather low budget adventures. Desmond Davis directed the shooting, long since over; now the painstaking Harryhausen magic is underway. For the moment, all's right with the movie - has to be when it has Larry Olivier among its gods.

ALIEN II?

Here's the opening sales-pitch for the next movie from the *Alien* story team of Ronald Shusett and Dan O'Bannon. 'Nuff said!

HUSTON HORROR

After 34 films in 38 years, all the classic way from *The Maltese Falcon* to *The African Queen* from *Moby Dick* to *Fat City*, there would seem to be little left to intrigue a master director like John Huston. At 73, he plainly doesn't think along those lines. That's why he's tackling his first ever horror-trip with *Phobia* in Canada, starring tele-supercop Paul Michael

In An Epic Entertainment Spectacular!



Gleser and local beauty Susan Hogan. The story stems from five eager minds. The original story is by Gary Sherman and a certain Ronald Shusett - co-writer and executive producer of *Alien*. The actual script comes from Lew Lehmann, Peter Bellwood and the old Hammer hand, Jimmy Sangster. Huston is continuing to keep good company!

Even so, and not forgetting a 5.1 million dollar budget, the film is in trouble. There is another movie afoot called *Phobia* - Armand

Weston's creepy sterring, among others, the venerable John Carradine. As Weston's film will be finished and out first, Mr Huston will have to change his title. I'm told his *Phobia* is much akin to *Psycho*. Well, he can't call it that, either! Fortunately, that's where those five scribes have been worth their cut of the hefty budget. Alone, in tandem or quintet, they had already come up with a sub-title: *A Descent Into Terror*... Sounds as if Huston's difficulties are over before they've really started.

A JOHN HUSTON FILM
PAUL MICHAEL GLASER • SUSAN HOGAN



PHOBIA

A RELEASED INTO THEATRE

MAJORS CHASE

Lee Majors has been training behind the wheel of a 250mph Porsche 917-10 racer in order to do his own driving stunts in *The Last Chase* — his Canadian sf comeback. Director Martyn Burke calls the project, "the most technically sophisticated feature ever made in Canada." Actually, most of it will be shot in the Arizona desert, and along some 21 miles of Arizona

highway, closed for the nine week's filming. Shooting began on October 8, with a 5-million dollar budget. *The Last Chase* takes place just a few years from now, when America has no more petrol and all private cars are benned. Lee Majors ("I used to be the Majors on the end of Ferris Fawcett," he quips these days) is the inevitable loner defying government orders and

smashing his Porsche right across the country — with Burgess Meredith in hot pursuit in a Sebre jet, watched on videos by the government officials. Script is by Christopher Crow with added input from Roy Moore in Toronto. The chase will be shot from a Leer jet hired for the film, along with three Sebres in ell. Sounds a major chase.



Somewhere in the future
the chase has begun.
A Porsche jet must fight its way through
the last car left in the world.

Lee Majors • Burgess Meredith

the last
chase

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SCIENCE FICTION ON TELEVISION

In this, the second part of our lightning look at science fiction on television, Tise Vahimagi covers the years from 1965 and *Lost in Space* to the present day *Sapphire and Steel*.

Right: *The Time Tunnel* was the least successful of the Irwin Allen tv fantasy offerings, lasting only thirty episodes. Far right: Despite the fantastic success of his *Star Trek* series, Gene Robbenberry (pictured here on the set of his *Genesis II* tv movie) has never been able to produce a similar blockbuster.

Below: *Dr Who* is the longest running sf tv show of all time, appearing continuously from 1963 to the present day. The scene shown here depicts one of the Doctor's early enemies, the Zarbi, who appeared in the 6-episode story *The Web Planet*.

The Invaders was a Quinn-Martin production which starred Roy Thinnes as David Vincent, who witnesses the landing of a flying saucer and then tries unsuccessfully to convince the world of the danger. The show ran 43 episodes from 1967-1968.

Following his breakthrough on American tv screens with *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, Irwin Allen's next adventurous endeavour also started on a high note in trade reviews. "The Perils of Pauline were mere snickers compared to the dangers encountered in CBS-TV's new sci-fi cliff-hanger *Lost in Space*, which debuted Wednesday night at 7.30. Weekly serial, great tongue-in-cheek spoofer, should lure kids like old Saturday matinees, while adults will watch just to hiss the villain or make snide remarks. Producer-creator Irwin Allen has a sure-fire hit in this one, with director Tony Leader using cameras to great advantage, especially with special effects."

Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea ran

for 4 years. *Lost in Space* ran for 3, but, sadly for Mr Allen, the next one he produced, *The Time Tunnel*, only lasted for 30 episodes. The *Time Tunnel* concerns a top-secret US research project which is concealed beneath the Arizona desert and into which the government has

Last of the 60s Irwin Allen shows was *Land of the Giants*.

poured billions of dollars. By way of showing progress, two of the scientists (played by James Darren and Robert Colbert) hurl themselves into the tunnel and travel back in time. However, a flaw is discovered in the electronic equipment and the two men cannot be returned. They can be moved about in time, by the

turn of a dial, and it is their adventures in different time periods that makes up the premise of the show. Now this concept may sound curious, even intriguing, but the show soon plunged to the deaths of formula and mediocrity.

The last of the '60s Irwin Allen projects was *Land of the Giants*, beginning in September, 1968, via the ABC-TV network. Involving the trials and tribulations of a group of people who find themselves on a strange planet inhabited by a race who are relatively huge, the series made excellent use of oversize props, perspectives and special photographic effects (the latter skilfully performed by L.B. Abbot, Art Cruickshank and Emil Kosa Jr). *Hollywood Reporter's* reviewer took a



kindly view of the premiere segment: "Jumping in to fill the ABC-TV time period vacated by his own *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, which reluctantly departed almost two years after it had run out of ideas and new monster suits, producer, director and — as they say — 'creator' Irwin Allen has come up with a far more promising science fantasy, one which need never call upon the intrusion of a latex broccoli or a Chiclets blob, one in which the most commonly observed flora and fauna of daily life can assume frightening perspective and inspire the greatest ingenuity in encounter".

Star Trek came along and made its mark in 1966 — and it has remained indelible for over 13 years. The secret of the show's success, its world-wide popularity, has been analysed and cross-checked innumerable times — it simply remains a milestone in tv history. It is also sad to think that no other sf television series (with the slight exception of *Dr Who*, *The Outer Limits* and *The Prisoner*) has been so deeply examined, so often explored and documented.

Unfortunately, also, that the "godfather" of *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry, has since been unable to emulate his original success. He has tried with the pilots for *Genesis II* (1973), *Planet Earth*



(1974) and *The Questor Tapes* (also '74) but still failed to achieve a *Trek*-like success. *Star Trek* remains as the original case of the right audience at the right time.

One of the last notable shows to be produced in the 1960s was *The Invaders*, a subtle trip into the paranoia of "there are aliens among us". A trade journalist bit deeply into the show when it premiered in January, 1967: "This hour-long 'second season' entry from QM Productions owes much to Walter Wanger's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Indeed, Anthony Wilson's teleplay for this Larry Cohen 'creation' abounds in holes which a memory of the earlier film helped fill.

"Like many a pilot presentation, the opener indulged in presumptive economies. [Roy] Thinnies instinctively sized up the situation of alien invasion in a single line. The title did the rest."

Although made-for-tv movies had been going since the early 1960s, sf-orientated

Science Fiction tv-movies began to appear in the early '70s.

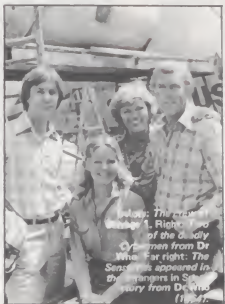
tele-movies didn't appear in any great number until the start of the Seventies. Among the more interesting of these tv movies were *Night Slaves* (1970), about a townful of people under alien influence; *The Challenge* (1970), featuring two men alone on an island fighting to determine the outcome of World War III; *The Love War* (1970), with two aliens using earth as their battleground; *Hauser's Memory* (1970), an effective thriller about memory transference. One of the most remarkable of television sf thrillers came along in 1973, entitled *A Cold Night's Death*. Directed by Jerrold Freedman and brilliantly penned by Christopher Knopf, the story concerns a malignant presence in an arctic research laboratory and its investigation by scientists Robert Culp and Eli Wallach. A truly eerie masterpiece of science fantasy made for television.

Kit Pedler & Gerry Davis's *Doomwatch* for the BBC premiered on February 9, 1970, and concerned the

activities of a group of scientists who act as sentinels in areas of scientific research. Produced by Terence Dudley, the series starred John Paul, Simon Oates, Robert Powell and Wendy Hall. The Robert Powell character was "killed off" at the end of the first season, but the series continued and was spun-off into a feature film, directed by Peter Sasdy, in 1972.

Moonbase 3 began in September, 1973, and was set in the year 2003 with a scientific community living on the moon. Created and produced by Terrence Dicks and Barry Letts, the show tended to be a rather tedious observation of "life" on the moon; Donald Houston, Christine Bradwell and Ralph Bates were among the regular cast.

Among such other British entries as *The Survivors*, *Star Maidens* (an Anglo-



Below: The crew of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Right: Two of the deadly Cyclopses from *Dr. Who*. Far right: The Sensei, as appeared in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

German effort), 1990 and BBC-TV's failed Into Infinity pilot that haunted the small-screen during the early-to-mid '70s, Terry Nation's *Blake's 7* is the only one to produce any form of excitement. Although many previous tv and feature film influences can be detected throughout *Blake's 7*, Nation's scripts attempted to locate the show around some form of action — as opposed to dull, talky teleplays (too often the problem with British tele-fantasy). Whereas *Doctor Who* is firmly set in its own, conscious groove, *Blake's 7* unfortunately attempts to attract both the juvenile and adult markets, and seems to lose its direction somewhere in the middle. It would be interesting — one day, maybe — to see Tom Baker's *Doctor Who* enter an adventure alongside Gareth Thomas's *Blake* character.

Back on the American side of the field, a 1969 made-for-tv movie called *The Immortal* became the pilot for the 1970 series of the same name. Christopher George played Ben Richards "a man whose blood contains antibodies



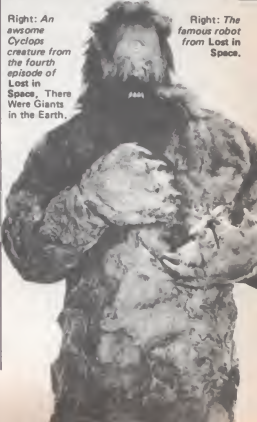
Left: Ben Richards has yet to make it to British tv screens. Above: Tom Baker is the latest actor to portray Dr. Who. Right: Arch enemy of the Doctor, the late Roger Delgado, from Dr. Who.

which make him immune to disease and old age." The ABC-TV network publicity continued, "because his blood has remarkable rejuvenating powers Richards is constantly on the run from those who want to use him for personal gain". Despite an obvious variation of the popular *The Fugitive* series from the mid-Sixties *The Immortal* lasted only one season.

One of the biggest money-spinners to hit tv during the early '70s was MCA-TV's *The Six Million Dollar Man* series. Based on the book *Cyborg* by Martin Caidin, *The Six Million Dollar Man* featured Lee Majors as Col Steve Austin, a former astronaut who survives a jet crash and has limbs replaced by bionic parts — both legs, an arm and an eye. Acquiring super-human abilities, Austin now uses his "skills" to combat anything from foreign dictators to weather-controlling mad scientists. In 1976 he was joined by *The*

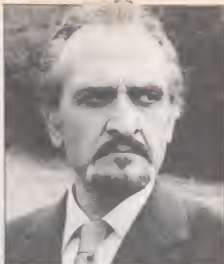
Right: An awesome Cyclops creature from the fourth episode of *Lost in Space*. There Were Giants in the Earth.

Right: The famous robot from *Lost in Space*.



Bionic Woman, with Lindsay Wagner in the title role. Also from the same stable — Universal/MCA-Television — came *The Invisible Man*, a 1975 entry starring David McCallum. Only vaguely associated with the H.G. Wells concept, *The Invisible Man* ran for only one season; what would have been its second season turned up as *The Gemini Man*, featuring Ben Murphy as a character who can utilise invisibility for short spells. Each was worse than the other.

Based on the success of 20th Century-Fox's *Planet of the Apes* features during the '60s and early '70s, CBS-TV spawned a tele-series based on the movies, retaining Roddy McDowall and partnering him with stranded astronauts Ron Harper and James Naughton. Low on imagination and effects, the *Planet of the*



fantasy series and tossed them all into one brew. Starring Jared Martin, Carl Franklin, Ike Eismann and Katie Saylor, the show related the misadventures of a group of people caught in the Bermuda Triangle and washed up on the shores of a "mysterious" island. Roddy McDowall became the star of the series with the second episode. A contemporary reviewer saw the initial 90-minute episode as "NBC, taking another giant step backward in quality programming, introduced this 'family hour' series last Thursday night in an incredibly inept entry called *Vortex*. I felt as if I were being drowned in a whirlpool of writing clichés and infantile situations". One man's meat, maybe. There is one episode, entitled *Riddle*, that is quite interesting, involving an old house in which time can be made



Apes series soon disappeared off the small-screen.

Another big-screen spin-off, appearing in 1977, was *Logan's Run*, derived from the 1976 MGM movie. Despite some interesting effects the series shuffled from one tedious situation to another, with the lead characters (Gregory Harrison, Heather Menzies and Donald Moffat, as an android) searching the countryside for "Sanctuary".

Jack Webb, creator, producer, writer

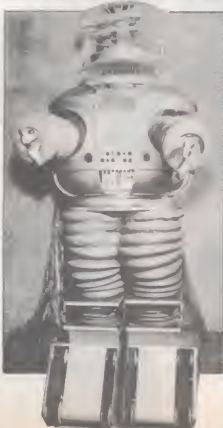
Project UFO was inspired by the success of *Close Encounters*.

and director of the old *Dragnet* police series, produced *Project UFO* in 1978 — somewhat inspired by the success of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. The show is "based" on the US Air Force's "Project Blue Book" files, dramatising various UFO reports and sightings. The special effects range from curious to cardboard and the general theme of the show has two USAF investigators backtracking reports of contact and sightings, usually resulting in a "logical" explanation for

the phenomena. The two investigators are pure *Dragnet* characters — instead of wanting "just the facts, ma'am," they merely wish to "determine the facts, sir". *The Howard Crossing Incident* episode with Leif Erickson and his little green men is truly a delight — for those with a good sense of humour.

Battlestar Galactica is a supreme failure, picking up where something like *Lost in Space* left off and *Star Wars* began. Concerning the wanderings of a galactic community, the pilot show was released as a feature film in Europe. The problem with *Battlestar Galactica*, perhaps, is that although the special effects are excellent — especially for the small-screen — the characters and live action situations are played to a level of sheer absurdity.

Backtracking a bit, *The Fantastic Journey* series grabbed up most of the formula plots and situations from various



to stand still — along with the age of its inhabitants.

The comedy phase of *My Favorite Martian*, etc, appears to be returning, with efforts like *Quark*, about an intergalactic trash-collector, and *Salvage One*, about a space-age junk-collector. The special effects may progress but the "good old ideas" don't, unfortunately. There is, however, one fantasy sitcom that has rung the changes on a comical character with super-abilities in a domestic situation — *Mork and Mindy*.

Sapphire and Steel is a twice weekly sf oddity.

Featuring Robin Williams as Mork, a character from the planet Ork, he first made an appearance in an episode of *Happy Days* and then went into his own series, co-starring with Pam Dawber.

One of the most recent sf oddities comes from Britain's ATV network, in the form of the twice-weekly *Sapphire and Steel* series. The show concerns two alien characters (of the title), played by David McCallum and Joanna Lumley,

who appear on Earth to investigate disturbances in time. "I'd always been fascinated by famous mysteries like the Marie Celeste and the Bermuda Triangle and also by stories of time travel," says series' creator/writer P.J. Hammond. "It struck me that almost everything's been done about travelling backwards or forwards in time; it's usually all silver suits or dinosaurs — and yet people are still interested".

Thirty years of television have already gone by, and in the sf genre there is a whole world of tv science fiction to explore. I have just touched on the tip of

the iceberg made mention of the more popular, more famous shows seen on British and American television screens during the last three decades. There is a lot more to uncover. One point of fact is that we, in the UK, only get to see about

Only one eighth of all US tv shows reach this country.

one eighth of the output of American television, so you can imagine what percentage of fantasy material drifts by.

Naturally, we can be grateful that we don't get to see some of the offerings — because they are utter rubbish — but

then, surely everything is worth exploring however good, bad or ugly it may be.

There is the world of "kid-vid", for example. Those shows made primarily for Saturday morning and late afternoon audiences — series like *The Ark II*, *Land of the Lost*, *The Lost Saucer*, *Shazam!*, *Space Giants*, *The Tomorrow People*, *Timeslip*, *Target Luna*, etc, etc.

With big-screen science fiction explored to the Nth degree it is time for the small-screen to be fully examined before it is despatched into that void of "lost films and series".

At the time of this writing, one of



Above left: Lyndsay Wagner as *The Bionic Woman* from the episode about the *American Abominable Snowman*, *Bigfoot*. Above: Joanna Lumley and David McCallum as

Supernatural from the episode about the *Who* story *The Tenth Doctor* (11/5/77).



Britain's major tv channels has on their shelf all 49 episodes of *The Outer Limits*, ready for telecast. It has been over a year since the particular channel acquired the show — and they still haven't decided on a programme slot. Chances are that it may never get to reach the small-screen in the UK, so those fans with only a fading memory of the show and those who have seen the series but have been intrigued by its legendary status, they may lose out through tv network misconception, mis-handling and general ineptness at understanding one's audience.



Jonathan Harris
(as Dr Zachary Smith) clowns around in the
episode of *Lost in Space*, The Golden Man.

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THE STARBURST FAN

AFTER ALL THE MONTHS OF COUNTING VOTES THE FANTASY FILM AWARDS WERE PRESENTED AT THE FANTASY FILM CONVENTION EARLIER THIS YEAR.



For most fantasy film buffs in Britain, the weekend of 15th-16th September, 1979 was a highpoint in their calendar. For over that weekend, the Second Fantasy Film Convention was held in London.

Like the previous year, the Convention was a multi-avent gathering, with almost non-stop fantasy films being screened in one hall, while special guests lectured in another. In a third, extensive exhibition of model work from tv and films was shown. While elsewhere signing sessions, video shows and the constant selling of posters, film stills, magazines and books was taking place.

This year's special guests were numerous, but among the instantly recognisable names were Hemmer's number one director Terence Fisher, BBC top model-maker Mat Irvine, Radiophonic Workshop's Dick Mills, just about everybody from Blaka's 7, Rocky Horror's creator/star Richard O'Brien, screenwriter Christopher Wicking and film censor John Farman, . . . all of whom gave fascinating talks on their careers.

Names familiar to Starburst readers: Tony Crawley, John Brosnan, John Fleming, Tise Vahimegi, Denis Gifford and Alan McKenzie also participated, both in panels and two of the whackiest quizzes outside of tv, hosted and devised by Mervel-man Dez Skinn.

But for many, the highlight of the weekend was the Saturday evening presentation of the Starburst Awards.

To a capacity audience of over seven hundred, editor Dez presented the awards, aided by the far prettier form of Donna Leigh. As many of the guests had interesting comments to make, here, along with the results, are

adited highlights of the presentation . . .

Dez Skinn: The first category in the Starburst Awards 1978 is *Best Film*, and this has been won by *Star Wars*.

To collect the award on behalf of the movie we are lucky to have with us the associate producer of *The Empire Strikes Back* - which is of course the sequel, and continuation of the *Star Wars* saga. Will you welcome please Mr Robert Watts.

Robert Watts: Thank you very much indeed for this award. I'm apologising on behalf of Gary Kurtz, the producer, who had hoped to be here tonight, but unfortunately he had another engagement in Poland. I think you'll all be glad to know we completed principal photography on *The Empire Strikes Back* on September 5th, and this picture will be premiered in London on May 16th next year, with another premiere in Washington on May 17th. It will also go on general release in this country on May 17th next year. So I hope you'll all go see that as well. Thank you very much indeed for this award.

Dez Skinn: 1978 was a very hectic year for fantasy films - being the year which started this whole new revolution in movies. Because of this, votes ran close. In the second category - *Best Actor* - the award went to the star of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, Mr Richard Dreyfuss.

This award will be collected by the director of publicity for Columbia Pictures, Mr Donald Murray.

Donald Murray: Thank you very much, on behalf of Richard Dreyfuss. We will be sending this award on to him, and he has been informed he has won it. But, like Steven Spielberg, he seems to have gone to earth somewhere

and we weren't even able to get a message from him to you today, but nevertheless, on his behalf, thank you.

Dez Skinn: Another fantasy film which premiered in 1978 was the winner of our *Best Actress* award . . .

Margot Kidder, for her performance in *Superman*. Unfortunately *laughter from audience* Margot Kidder's in America right now, so we'll be sending the award on to her.

The fourth category was rather difficult, again with close votes, over the *Best Special Effects* in a fantasy feature film 1978. It was very close indeed, but eventually the award was won by John Dykstra for *Star Wars*.

To collect the award we have with us the publicist for the *Star Wars*, Mr Alan Arnold.

Alan Arnold: Thank you very much for awarding this to John Dykstra and his team for *Star Wars*. A publicist receiving an award for special effects seems particularly inappropriate, except that we have one thing in common, in that we both have a relationship to fantasy. I do thank you very much indeed for your votes and I will be sending the award on to John.

Dez Skinn: For *Best Newcomer*, there was little competition. The award went to Christopher Reeve for his role as *Superman*.

Chris I saw two weeks ago, he had wanted to come to pick up the award - I looked the news out to him - but we seem to be in the wrong country perhaps, as he had to leave for America only a few short days ago.

In the category of *Best Screenplay*, the winner by a clear majority was Steven Spielberg.

Mr Donald Murray of Columbia will collect the award.



EASY FILM AWARDS

Donald Murray: Steven Spielberg came over to Britain last year for the Royal Film Performance, the UK premiere of *Close Encounters* and I found him a terribly nice, very charming and very sincere man. And I believe that he will be delighted to receive this. Again, I couldn't track him down for a message but he's been terribly busy as you probably know making two pictures at the same time. He's been making a comedy entitled *1941*, which will be out early in the New Year in this country, and he's also been

working weekends on a new version of *Close Encounters* of the Third Kind. We are waiting with bated breath for this because, as always with Steven Spielberg, he won't really tell us what he's doing. *(Laughter from audience)*. We gather however he's added about 5 minutes to the beginning, he's taken out 15 minutes from the middle and he's added about 10 minutes at the end. Now this poses an extraordinary marketing problem for us as it won't be *Close Encounters* of the Third Kind 2, it's not a re-issue of the one we've already seen, but it's not an entirely new picture. I can only say to you that when it comes out in this country in September of next year I think it will interest you as much as it's going to interest us when we see it. *(Laughter from audience)*.

Daz Skinn: The next category is that of *Best Music*, which had a rather strange response. In reverse order, fourth position went to John Williams for anything – that is people didn't pick a specific movie when nominating him. In third position: John Williams *(Laughter from audience)* for

Superman. In second place it went to John Williams *(more laughter)* for *Close Encounters* of the Third Kind. The first place went to – *(uproars of laughter)* – yes, you've figured it out – for his music in *Star Wars*... John Williams. We have with us Robert Watts associate producer, who will pick up the award for John Williams.

Robert Watts: These awards were just a little bit early for John Williams to be here in person, but I know he thanks you all very much indeed. He will be back at the end of this year as we will be recording the music for *The Empire Strikes Back* with the London Symphony Orchestra. I know that the *Star Wars* music happens to be the particular favourite of the many scores John has written for films and I know he would thank you very much indeed for this award.

Daz Skinn: The next category of *Best Director* went once more to someone who received an earlier award. Mr Donald Murray is here once more on behalf of Steven Spielberg for *Close Encounters* of the Third Kind.

Donald Murray: Thank you very

much again. It's always pleasant to get awards... even by proxy. Daz Skinn: The next category is a rather difficult one, *Best All-Time Film*. Rather than having only a year – 1978 – to choose from, the nominations went back to almost the beginning of motion pictures. But the award was clearly won by 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. *(Enthusiastic applause from the audience)*.

I think that judging by that huge amount of applause you'll agree that it was a well deserved winner and really did get everything.

We did write to Stanley Kubrick *(laughter from audience)*. No, wait, don't laugh, he did write back – twice in fact to the one letter. He was obviously so pleased about it. Or maybe there was a change in secretary and the letter was sent twice, but we'd like to think it showed how pleased he was.

The final award in the film category is that of *Outstanding Achievement*. Again this can go back as far as cinema s-f, but was in fact won by George Lucas.

You've most likely guessed, George isn't here, but we're



Top left: Dick Mills of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop gives a demonstration. Top right: The crew of the *Liberator* sign autographs for their fans. Far left: The Blake's 7 team poses for a photo. Left: BBC special effects Mat Irvine.

man whose face you may not know, whose voice you may recognise, but whose name you're certainly familiar with. Anthony Daniels, C-3PO.

Anthony Daniels: Thank you. That's very nice. On behalf of George Lucas thank you very much indeed for this award. George is really the reason I'm connected with Star Wars, in fact he's the reason everybody's connected with Star Wars, but I was probably the only prospective employee who was actually dragged more or less screaming to see him by my agent. And what I was screaming was that I wouldn't play a robot if he paid me. So they didn't *(laughter from audience)*, and I did.

My agent left me with the instructions that George Lucas was really the original quiet American, and very shy, so I'd have to do all the talking. Well, contrary to popular belief, actors themselves are very shy. I'm one of them. So George and I sat in this room alone having this really terrific silence with each other *(laughter)*. Then after a while I got bored with it, and I'm sure he did, so I asked him what the film was about. And he exploded in a kind of enthusiastic outburst which lasted about an hour. I left after that clutching an absolutely incomprehensible script - if you could see Star Wars written down you wouldn't believe it, and that was when all the trouble started.

But one of the terrific things about tonight is that these awards - and Star Wars has got quite a few in its time - make all that pain and trouble and anxiety and boredom worth while.

Anyway, thank you for the award again, and if you thought Star Wars was good, you wait till you see *Close Encoun-er*, *(uproar of laughter)*. You see, if you slip me the right amount of money, I'll say anything.

Wait for The Empire Strikes Back. Thank you. Bye, bye.
Daz Skinn: The award for *Best TV Show 1978* in the fantasy genre has been won by Blake's 7. *(Huge applause)*

And with a response like that I should imagine that the producer of Blake's 7, Mr David Maloney, will be quite please to step forward for the award.

David Maloney: I'm delighted on



From top to bottom: At the Starburst Awards Ceremony editor Dez Skinn introduces Ron Grainer, composer of the theme music for Dr Who; Paul Darrow (Aron of Blake's 7) accepts his Award for Best TV Actor. Terry Nation, creator of Blake's 7 accepts his Award for Best TV Screenplay; Dr Who producer Graham Williams accepts an Award on behalf of Mary Tamm for Best TV Actress.

behalf of all those who worked on Blake's 7 to accept this award from Starburst. We have a new season beginning in January, with 13 new parts, which I hope you will enjoy equally. Thank you very much.

Dez Skinn: The second category *Best Actor* proved to be a clear win for a gentlemen we have with us this evening, Blake's 7 star, Paul Darrow.

Paul Darrow: I'm highly delighted that Steven Spielberg is making a movie called 1941, but I'm a little alarmed that it's a comedy, as that's the year I was born. However, as you all know, I'm sure, an actor works in many fields, the theatre, films, television. In the theatre, at the end of the show the audience shows its appreciation by applauding. On television you don't get that applause. It takes a little more effort, a little more energy, and sometimes a little expense to get that kind of applause. And your giving me this award tonight shows that indeed you have gone to a great deal of trouble, and I'm very touched. I'm very, very grateful. Thank you very much.
Daz Skinn: The *Best Actress* in a fantasy tv series of 1978 is the next category, with the award being won by Ms Mary Tamm for her role in Doctor Who.

We're fortunate to have with us the Doctor Who producer, Mr Graham Williams.

Graham Williams: I seem to have it on hitherto reliable information



that I'm not quite as pretty as Mary Tamm (laughter from audience), but then I have even better information that I'm not quite as pregnant (more laughter). That's why Mary can't be here, but I'm sure for any other reason to have displeased her from you. . . Well, a baby is good enough and (holding up award) this baby is good enough for her. Thank you. **Daz Skinn:** In the category of *Best Newcomer*, I think you may not be so certain. You've had a good idea who would win many of the awards, well this one went right across the Atlantic, to none other than Mork himself. . . Robin Williams.

Unfortunately he's at Ork right now, so he can't be with us either. But the award is being sent on to him, with our best wishes for the future.

Best Special Effects on tv in 1978 proved somewhat of a problem. While the fantasy movie genre was getting into full swing, tv — which so often reflects current movie trends — was still caught up in the cops and robbers syndrome. Nevertheless, attempts were being made on both sides of the Atlantic, to capture that fantasy market. Such a show was our *Special Effects* winner *Logan's Run*.

There are many reasons why a show is cancelled in the States. I'd like to think that if it had been made over here, it might have stood a better chance.

To collect this award we have

with us the vice president of MGM, Mr Bill Edwards.

Bill Edwards: I don't think all is lost. I was in contact with the studio yesterday and learnt that there is a strong possibility that *Logan's Run* could be re-shot as a new series. This is under active consideration. I think it's also not inappropriate to say that the studio, MGM, which gave you 2001 and *Logan's Run* hasn't deserted science fantasy in any way. In point of fact, at this moment we have just finished principal photography on a picture which Ray Harryhausen is doing for us, called *Clash of the Titans*. The time it takes for him to do the special effects means that you won't be able to see it for another 18 months. But perhaps next year it would be in order if I brought Ray Harryhausen along (huge round of cheering).

Once again, we're very proud of this award. Thank you all.

Daz Skinn: The next category is *Best Screenplay*. This has been won by the creator and writer of *Blake's 7*. Would you please welcome Mr Terry Nation.

Terry Nation: I think this is the first one I ever got, so I'm very pleased. I'd like you to vote again next year because I want one at the other end of the mantelpiece (laughter). And I don't know what you're all doing here. Why aren't you at home watching *Doctor Who*, which is my episode too (laughter). I couldn't be more pleased that this show has got an award, and that I've got an award, and we've got most of the crew of the *Liberator* here with us tonight and I'm delighted to see them. I think there's one award that pleases more than any other and that's the fact that Paul Darrow got the *Best Actor* award. That pleases me a great deal. Thank you very much indeed.

Daz Skinn: The next category is the *Best Theme Music* for a 1978 tv show. And a very unusual thing has happened. The theme music

which won was created for its show in 1963 and continues to this day to be heard. We have with us the *Doctor Who* theme composer, Mr Ron Greiner.

Ron Greiner: It's most encouraging that a theme written sixteen years ago should win this award. And I have to say, it was written on a bench in Portugal, so I don't really deserve it. The person who deserves a lot of the credit I'm glad to say is here tonight. I haven't seen her for many years, a charming and brilliant lady who helped realise this, in the years when it wasn't quite so easy to do electronic music. Delia Derbyshire. Thank you very much.

Daz Skinn: As you may be aware, *Starburst* magazine is now being published by Marvel Comics. But I must tell you that this in no way biased the next category's winner. *Best Screenplay Award* was won by a clear majority for Kenneth Johnson's pilot of *The Incredible Hulk*.

We have with us Mr Alistair Nicholson of Enterprise Pictures to collect the award.

Alistair Nicholson: You may be wondering why a film company should pick up a television award. Well, next year you'll see why, when *The Incredible Hulk* pilot is released — uncensored — as a feature film.

Daz Skinn: The penultimate category is that of *Best All-Time TV Show*. Now whatever wins, we're sure to elicit someone, because unfortunately, fans are split into factions. Lots of little groups, each supporting different shows. However, I hope you will agree with me that the winner of this award did truly deserve it. The winner being *Star Trek* (tremendous amount of applause).

We have with us the director of *Peremout* tv in the UK, Mr Melcolm Vaughan.

Melcolm Vaughan: Thank you very much indeed. William Shatner was going to fly over here today . . . well, actually he wasn't (laughter). As one or two of you may know, the feature version has been shot in Hollywood, with the original tv cast busy in what we call hectic budget-busting. It's due to be released in December, and from a selfish television point of view I hope it will create a resurgence of interest, so more episodes

will be produced later on. So, on behalf of Gene Roddenberry, the producer, and all the cast and crew, who I'm sure will be delighted with this award, thank you very much indeed.

Daz Skinn: Which brings us to our final award. For *Outstanding Achievement in Television*. When the votes came in, one summed it up perfectly for the winner. When writing he said of the gentleman who in fact won: "While he didn't always hit the nail on the head, he refused to let go of the hammer". And that of course meant Gerry Anderson (huge round of applause).

I'm glad you all echo that sentiment. As you doubtless know, Gerry was guest of honour here last year, but this year — we're pleased to say that he's tied up in something. That something you may hear more about in a moment. Because we received a note from Gerry saying that he would like the award to be picked up by someone he considers to be the most talented young, up-and-coming artists in the industry today, Kevin O'Neill.

Kevin O'Neill: Thank you very much. On Gerry's behalf I would like to thank the readers of *Starburst* for this incredible award. Gerry really was one of the first and one of the greatest pioneers of sci-fi on television. He kept it going when everyone else let it drop and made a success of it. I'm delighted to report that he's now moving into major feature film production, *Five Star Five*. This will be a multi-million dollar, big, big picture, which will pioneer Gerry Anderson's move into major motion pictures.

Daz Skinn: And so with that I'd like to thank the many people who have come along to collect the awards, and all of you who voted. Thanks again. Good night.

What followed was total mayhem. Despite the security guards' attempts to escort the guests out of the main hall, a veritable wave of pans, hands and autograph books overwhelmed them.

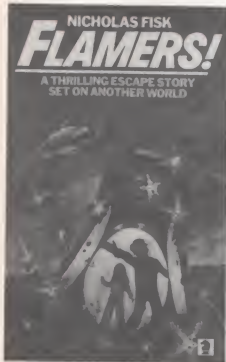
Many of the guests stayed behind, to spend several hours signing autographs and chatting with their fans, and I think it can be said that a good time was had by all.



Left: Anthony Daniels (*C3PO* of *Star Wars* fame) accepts the Award for Outstanding Achievement on behalf of George Lucas. Anthony Daniels is wearing his *C3PO* hand because he was once escorted from an Oscars ceremony when the guards didn't believe he was the famous gold robot of *Star Wars*. He didn't want the same thing to happen this time.

BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Angela Montgomery



FLAMERS! by Nicholas Fisk

Great balls of metal-eating fire! A hostile Planet! And a desperate, last minute escape! These are all part of this exciting sf book aimed at the younger market.

Mykel has been accidentally left behind by his parents on an alien planet. But escape is impossible, for the vicious Flamers, as the fire-balls are called, storm around in the air devouring anything made of metal. How, then, can a ship land on the planet to rescue the stranded Mykel? The remainder of the story deals with the attempts to solve the problem and save Mykel and his friend Amina (the only other person on the planet) and it's a desperate battle against time.

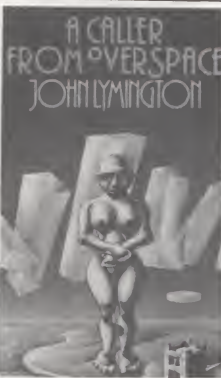
This story will keep you in suspense with every page. It's fluent, fast-moving and imaginative. It is also written in a plain, straightforward style which gives it pace. But don't let its simplicity fool you. It is far from being facile. The author has some interesting concepts. An example is the "door" of the empty settlement on the planet Spletterbang: "The glimmering well puckered and shrank, like sheet plastic burning. He walked into the well and through it. The hole mended itself to glassy perfection."

The characters are immediate and credible, especially the lovable computer Ego, (rethink like Tim in *The Tomorrow People*). He's a sort of space-age nanny who controls the Spletterbang Settlement and has very persuasive ways. He doesn't just provide Mykel with the necessities but actually coaxes him to eat and drink: "Go on, Mykel. Just to please me."

And the book is not merely entertaining. You can learn something too. The crux of the story rests on the Spletterbang Life-Cycle — an explanation of how plants and animals subsist on the planet. It comes complete with a diagram and it's a rather good way of interesting readers in the life-cycles of boring old Earth.

All in all, this book has a lot to recommend it. It's a good story, it's well written and it's exciting on every page. Well worth investing 60p in.

Published by Knight Books. 96 pages. 60p.



A CALLER FROM OVERSPACE by John Lymington

A Caller from Overspace by John Lymington is a slightly disjointed book that displays occasional flashes of inspiration but never quite comes together to form a cohesive whole.

The story itself is interesting. Two young families are living in an old Cornish vicarage. One day a small female figure carved in plasticine appears in four-year-old Gawain's bedroom. Strange things start to happen. Gawain is befriended by an invisible playmate. The women keep being caressed by someone they cannot see. And more disconcerting still, optical illusions cause familiar objects to be in places where they shouldn't be. The entire vicarage becomes pervaded by a weird atmosphere, yet no-one feels any alarm. Eventually, after the sighting of a strange light in the sky, they realise that a sort of low-key invasion is being perpetrated by unseen aliens. But unknown to

anyone, another far superior alien is monitoring the whole thing.

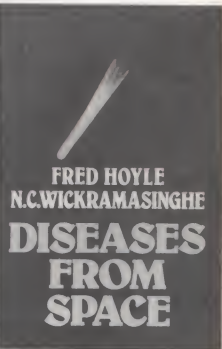
Unfortunately this book just doesn't flow. The author seems to keep getting side-tracked. He over-concentrates on certain aspects of the book in places, eg dialogue or character development, and this holds up the story-telling.

This is a great pity because the books has some very good ingredients. For example, Elfrida, the bohemian friend of the two couples, has the potential to be a great character. But she is not consistent. She seems to fade in and out. Also there is some very witty dialogue in the book when the author shows flashes of a sharp sense of humour.

Much of the dialogue is irritating with the characters trying to be too clever all of the time. In places Lymington uses a sort of stream-of-consciousness technique. This is rather pretentious and doesn't really work.

Despite its faults, this book is quite a fast read. That's because the story-interest manages to compensate for the other weaknesses.

Published by Hodder and Stoughton. 189 pages. £5.25.



DISEASES FROM SPACE by Fred Hoyle and N.C. Wickramasinghe

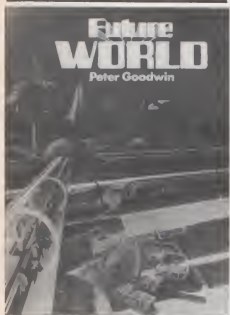
Fred Hoyle is an astronomer who is perhaps better known to sf fans for his many fine sf novels and stories. Hoyle also made a brief sort into television when he co-scripted *A for Andromeda* and *The Andromeda Breakthrough* for the BBC in 1961-62. His most recent novel, *The Incandescent Ones* (co-authored with his

son Geoffrey) is generally held to mark a downward trend in the quality of Hoyle's writing.

With *Diseases from Space*, Hoyle returns to his astronomical roots and postulates the theory that many famous plagues throughout history had their origins in the vast depths of space. The work is actually a text book and is best appreciated by a reader conversant with the sciences at least to an A level standard.

Certainly not qualifying as "entertainment", *Diseases from Space* is a fascinating read for the scientifically inclined.

Published by J.M. Dent & Sons. 196 pages. 6" x 9". £5.95.



FUTURE WORLD by Peter Goodwin

Future World is a colourful and educational (if expensive) Christmas present for a younger brother or sister. A cross between an encyclopedia and *Tomorrow's World*, the book is elevated above the average fare by its clear, precise and eminently readable text and the superb large colour illustrations and photographs. Every aspect of our ever-advancing technology is covered — from *Energy to Space Travel to Food Production* — and the book forms an excellent introduction to (and testimony for) the progression of science and technology to the limits of Man's capabilities.

Published by The Hamlyn Group. 156 pages. 9 1/2" x 12 1/2". £5.50.

THE MAN WHO ROSE HIS 10-SPEED BICYCLE TO THE MOON by Bernard Fischman

Believe it or not, this is not a children's book. The pretty cover and silly-sounding title are there just to fool you. You expect a story about some sort of inter-planetary version of Mr



Pastry. Instead you get a New York graphic designer with more than his share of urban hang-ups.

But once you actually sit down and begin to read the story it turns out to be an exclusively adult and rather postical fantasy. Stephan Aaron is a graphical designer who grows bored and numbed by city life. Everything is too familiar except the 10-speed bicycle his wife buys him for his forty-fifth birthday. At first he finds it difficult to ride, but gradually he masters it, to the point where the bicycle no longer touches the ground. Stephan realises that on such a bicycle a man could go anywhere, even to the moon. And that is exactly what he does. This bicycle is a source of revelation to Stephan. His relationship with his wife, with the beautiful girl who tells him she is a witch, and his whole life and career are revealed to him in a clear light in his trips on this mystical bicycle. Eventually he goes on the ultimate trip — through the stars to the moon — on a journey of self-discovery.

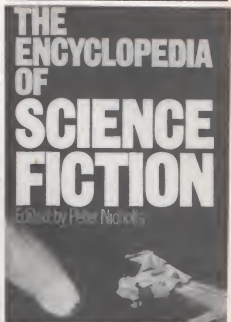
This may sound like a lot of airy-fairy hogwash. Actually, it works. This is a tale beautifully told, and that is what makes it succeed. The author gives this book a simple, uncluttered poetry which is very appealing. Even a huge city like New York seems magical when described by him.

The only rather irritating thing about this book is the way the author under-estimates his readers. He insists on explaining everything — the symbols and the message of the book — and this detracts a little from the story's appeal.

This tale may not be quite in the same class as the allegorical fantasies of Saint-Exupéry or C.S. Lewis. Nevertheless it has a simple charm. Anyone who has felt that there is more to life than the mundanities of existence will enjoy

sharing Stephan's journey. I wonder where you can buy lunar bicycle clips?

Published by Hodder and Stoughton. 97 pages. £4.25.



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION edited by Peter Nicholls

The most amazing thing about this superb reference work is that nobody has had the idea (energy?) to compile an encyclopedia of sf before now.

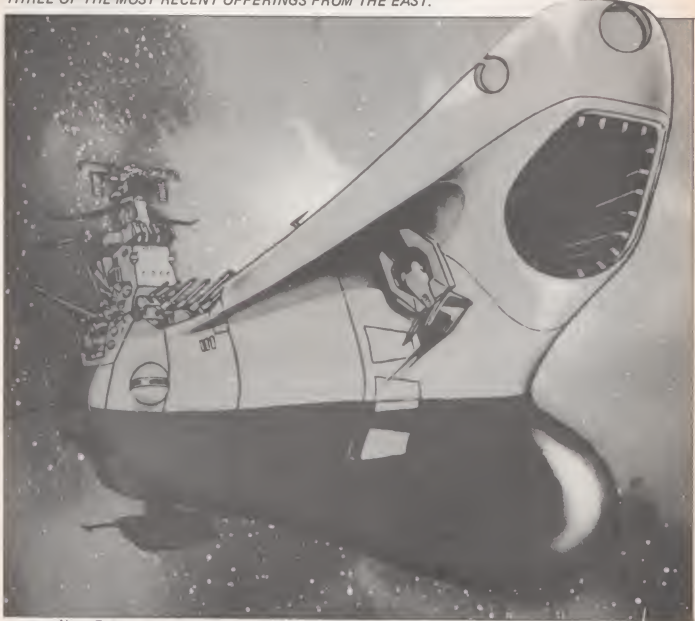
The book covers every aspect of the genre from science fiction literature and its authors through comics and pulp magazines to notable (and many not-so-notable) sf movies and their directors. And it is far from perochial. If a subject is only marginally identifiable as science fiction, then Nicholls includes it to be on the safe side. For example, while the pulp series *Doc Savage* included sf elements to the extent of almost relying on them, another pulp character, *The Spider*, was the Dirty Harry of the 1930s and his allegibility is debatable to say the least. But that is criticising the book's strength rather than its weaknesses.

In fact, so thorough is this work that it is extremely difficult to think of a potential entry that has been missed by Nicholls or his contributors. And two of those contributors are well known to Starburst readers — John Brosnan and John Baxter — themselves meriting entries within the body of the encyclopedia.

Though expensive, the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* is an invaluable addition to the collection of any science fiction fan. I wonder how I have managed without it all these years? Published by Granada Publishing. 672 pages. 7 1/2" x 10 1/2". £15.00.

SF IN THE EAST

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE BREACH OPENED UP FOR SF BY STAR WARS THE JAPANESE ARE ONLY NOW BEGINNING TO EXPORT SOME OF THEIR SCIENCE FICTION CARTOONS TO THE WESTERN WORLD. STARBURST REVIEWERS TONY CRAWLEY AND BOBBY DUPEA REPORT ON THREE OF THE MOST RECENT OFFERINGS FROM THE EAST.



Above: The Space Cruiser Yamato flies again in Arriverderci Space Cruiser Yamato. Opposite: Two scenes from the film.

ARRIVERDERCI SPACE CRUISER

Report by Bobby Dupea

There was not much, I seem to recall, that trenchant Starburster Tony Crawley could find in favour of *Space Cruiser* — Japan's sf animation trip (see *Starburst* 2). It was, though purely by accident, the international screen's first direct response to *Star Wars*, and

considering the thoroughly mediocre stuff that has been winging our way ever since, *Space Cruiser Yamato* (to give the film its true title) was not that bad after all.

Actually, it was being made before, or at least at the same time as *Star Wars*. There's no way a 101-minute animation film — even from Japan — could have been started, finished and released so rapidly after Lucas. So it was never trying to cash in on the Lucasfilm at all.

Well now . . . prepare yourself for a second

slice: 151 minutes this time, from the same Toei team of creator Yoshinobu Nishizaki, character-designer Leiji Matsumoto and composer Hiroshi Miyagawa. And if you feel that lot is a mouthful, wait for the title. Are you really ready for: *Arriverderci Space Cruiser Yamato*. The original must have been a vast success in Italy. Sayonara *Space Cruiser Yamato*, I might expect — but *arriverderci* . . . ?

The Tokyo trojans have offered an alternate title as well. Tremendous Knights. They may be

hot stuff in animation circles. But they really need to go back to the drawing board where titling is concerned.

Whatever you call it, this one *is* influenced by *Star Wars*, with more than a touch of *Closa Encounters* — in it's eye-popping achievement, the impregnable Comet Empire . . . This is a super looking mix of Lucas' Death Star and Trumbull's Mother Ship.

For those of us who braved the wrath of Crawley's review, we left the original in 2200 AD with an irradiated Earth being saved from the Gorgon hordes by the old battleship Yamato, pride of the Jap World War II fleet being dug up and refurbished as an intergalactic space cruiser.

Now, it's 2201. Earth is thriving anew. The poor old Yamato is back in mothballs, replaced as flagship of the Earth Fleet by the new

After the last film, Yamato has returned to more mundane duties.

super-dreadnought Andromeda, complete with all-powerful undulation guns. And our previous heroes — Kodai, Shima, Senada and the rest of the Yamato's 114-man crew — are back to mundane duties, like escorting interplanetary transporters.

Or they are until they start receiving an SOS, sound only, and later a *Star Wars*-style holographic image, from a lady called Teresa of the planet Tereset. The government refuses any rescue attempt, but the Yamato boys go after her anyway, joined by extra forces, including commando leader, Saito. The closer they get to her voice — and thereby her planet — the more dangerous adventures they run into. And predicted doom.

Teresa warns them of a weird white comet out to destroy not merely Earth this time, but every planet in the universe. The Yamatoans, then, have a hell of a fight on their hands. King Zwarder of the Comet Empire gives a fleet of missile boats to Desler, leader in the first film of the Gorgons of Gamilus, and out to avenge himself . . .

Once our young heroes reach Tereset — and therefore Teresa — there's no hugging and

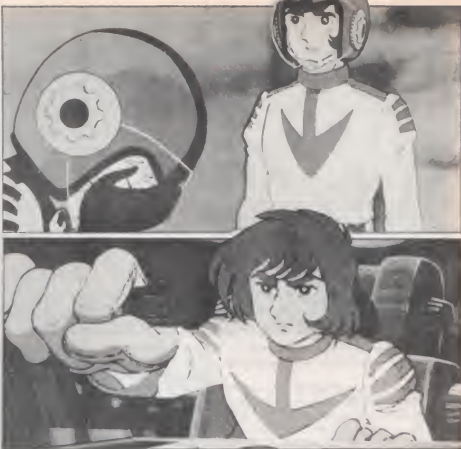
The Yamato and the Earth defence forces battle a white comet.

kissing. Not even a handshake. She's a very aetheral young lady — of negative substance. "If I touch an aetherial, a terrible explosion will occur," she explains. Hmmmm! Having told Kodai and his troops as much as she can about the evil doings of Zwarder and his Comet Empire — she disappears.

And so the big battle is won. The Yamato and the Earth Defence Forces versus this white comet. No contest! Zwarder commands Earth to surrender. Yamato warps about and fires its undulation gun. Flash-bang-wallop — the white comet burst into flames . . . then out of the fire looms this bizarre spherical fortress, the very substance of the comet. The Comet Empire itself.

Round Two . . .

But no, I'm not giving the ending away. Except to say, it's not what you think, but yes it is very Japanese.



VOLTUS V Report by Bobby Dupea

Toei of Tokyo are really pushing out the first animation this year. After their *Yamato* sequel, their myriad tv series (which is, I'm sure where their films derive from), *Voltes V* is their latest export to an expectant world. Ninety-three minutes of supercharged adventures starring the mightiest robot in space, yet. (Beat that, Richard Kiel).

Trouble is with Toei, if you've seen one, you've more or less seen them all. The poor old Earth is being invaded again — "two million years since human beings first came into the world".

Fortunately, for background art work, the Earth Defence Forces are headquartered in Tokyo. Unfortunately for the HQ, the Boazan Empire know where it's situated and sends in Super Hornet, a monstrous robot to waste them. Fortunately, for everyone else, we have our own secret weapon — Voltus Five, a super, electro-magnetic robot machine, developed by a certain Dr Armstrong. Unfortunately, no one knows where Dr Armstrong is. Fortunately, his children (kids are a staple part of any Toei sf show) can crew the machine — Steve, Bert, Little John, Merk and Jamie.

And so it goes on, with one unfortunately always being balanced by a clever fortunately . . .

For example, with Super Hornet destroyed, the beastly Boazians send in the Falcon robot. And this one's pretty good — has it's own "chain weight" plus some kind of rod with

splinters. That keeps Voltus at bay. But if Dr Armstrong is missing, his missus is pretty sharp and she destroys Falcon with a single plane-load of well-aimed bombs.

Finally, we get to know where Dr A is. Held

Voltes V is heavy metal and the clash of steel against steel.

prisoner by the Boazians, of course — at the Earth Invasion Base on Horror Island. Young Bert heroically sets out to rescue Dad. Unfortunately, while he's away, a new attack on Earth begins. Fortunately, the other kids are left to crew Voltus. Unfortunately, they cannot join Voltus in time. Fortunately . . . well, you can guess the rest.

No, not one of Toei's best offerings. Unless you're into heavy metal, the clash of steel against steel, robots clanging together in the night, and eternal big battles going on and on . . .

And on.

FUTURE ROBOT DARTANIAS Report by Tony Crawley

The immaculately-suited Mr Masayoshi Endo, of the Paris office of Tokyo's Toei Company was pleased to see Starburst in the flesh — end vice versa — after all our letters back and forth. Mr Endo was also wondering if we could not, maybe, encourage some television network in Britain, BBC-TV, ITV or DEZ-TV (don't laugh, it'll come!) to stop being

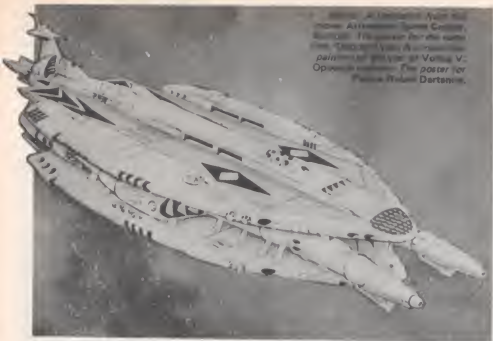


Illustration of the Yamato, the Japanese battleship that was the last to be sunk in the Pacific War. The ship was built in 1940 and was the largest battleship ever built. It was sunk by the USS Arizona on April 7, 1945. The ship was built in Japan and was the largest battleship ever built. It was sunk by the USS Arizona on April 7, 1945. The ship was built in Japan and was the largest battleship ever built. It was sunk by the USS Arizona on April 7, 1945.

so silly and actually shell out some cash to buy one of the innumerable Toei animation tv space series.

The rest of the world bought them, said Mr Endo, how come Britain never did. We said much the same, and we had to leave it at that. However, if you're intrigued enough by this particular feature on the Japanese sf shows, why don't you cut it out, attach a letter explaining what we are all missing out on and send it off to BBC, IBA, Thames, London Weekend, Granada, Harlech or whatever station covers your area. You never know.

Future Robot Dantarias is a sort of super fighting machine, a one-robot Three Musketeers. And it's some weapon. Fifty-six metres high, 678 tons in weight and capable of moving at 600 km per hour on land. Its weaponry includes a double-knuckle, a giant spinner, a sigma beam, a ray-thunder and something known as a supermagnetic eraser...!

Future Robot Dantarias is four robots in one.

Dantarias is the invention of 60-year old Dr Earl, member of the House of Elder Statesmen of the Elios Empire. He built the robot to help his emperor save Elios from the Zor Star Forces. But it takes time and patience to create a super-machine like Dantarias. Suffice it to say that the war was over—and lost—before Dr Earl finished the job.

No matter. He still finds plenty of other uses for Dantarias—well, the same use, really, fighting the Zors.

The aged scientist with the Santa Claus beard is not alone in these endeavours; nor, indeed is Dantarias. Future-man Atlas, for example, is a mini-Dantarias (280 tons), and comes complete with hand-slicer, boomerang cutter and shredder punch. Future-lion Beralios is smaller still (195 tons) and therefore faster (750 km per hour), a golden metal lion with built-in Beta missiles and beams. Future-machine Gunper is a star-fighter craft, with

missiles and its own attack sword — and Future-jet Delighter is a tinier version of the Gunper, with machine-guns and small-missiles.

Put that lot together — and you have Dantarias. For where Dr Earl is so clever — and it's almost traditional to have piece-by-piece machines in Japanese sf — is that all these elements fit together. Atlas, Beralios, Gunper and Delighter all dock into Dantarias, making the robot an almost invincible (certainly weighty) death machine.

Also rather traditional in Tokyo space fantasy is the link with the country's defeat in the last war. In Space Cruiser, the Yamato was a World War II battleship, brought up from the sea-bed where the Allies had sent it, and turned into battleship for outer space. Similarly, in Future Robot Dantarias, the story is set in 1995 where a lovely city by the ocean has been destroyed by a robot army and life soon resembles the chaos of Japan after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Thousands are dead — and a black market prospers in the ruins.

Amid all this hustle and bustle are a bunch of kids, teenage and under, scrambling for a



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Put that lot together—and you have Dartanias. For where Dr Earl is so clever—and it's almost traditional to have piece-by-piece machines in Japanese sci—is that all these elements, Atleus, Barellos, Gunper and Delighter dock into Dartanias, making the robot an almost invincible (and certainly weighty) death machine.

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Amid all this hustle and bustle are a bunch of kids, teenage and under, scrambling for a living—for food, in fact. They fight the black mekteers and cling to each other for support . . . under the leadership of 16-year old Kento Tete.

And it's while searching for some new form of sustenance that these children find a cave-filled with consoles and instuments. They press a few buttons and the machines begin to stir. An old man with a white beard awakes. Our heroes have stumbled into Dr Earl's spaceship Adals, from a thousand years ago.

Well, that takes some explaining of course. Earl tells his tale: How troops from the planet Zeer, and those planets it had conquered, made Ellos its new target. How he tried to finish the robot in time and failed, loaded Dartanias and the rest of his spaceship and took off from his conquered homelend, vowing to restore it some day. And how, by some freak mishap, he made a forced landing on Earth all those years in the past. There was nothing on Earth at the time to help the old scientist repair his ship, so he went into cold sleep until such time as Earth's



scientific techniques caught up with his own.

The kids have woken him up. And what does he find on his computers but that Earth is the latest target of the Zeer Star Allied Forces—the robots which had wiped out the kids' home in Keinen.

The old fellow is determined to keep his vow—and wipe out the Zeers. The kids are only too pleased to join in and help avenge their dead families. And so the various adventures and battles (and some heavy-handed Japanese attempts at kiddie-humor) begin.

Kento Tete, leader of the children's band, turns out to be a descendant of the old Ellos emperor—therefore the cyborg lion, Barellos, obeys his every command. Kento also proves to be the best pilot of the Delighter jet which can constitute the head of either Atleus or Dartanias.

The rest of this kids' army includes a stone-throwing loner caller Danji, a doctor's daughter who tends the youngsters, Jiro and Dcheme;

Leader of the bad-guys is Cloppen, a dead-ringer for Darth Vader.

a memmoth 12-year old called Tenosuke possibly related to Asterix the Gaul's Dbelix; and a bespectacled bright led who assists Dr Earl—and faints every time he sees a cockroach.

On the other side is a motley-looking crew of nesty Zeers who might have strolled out of the Cantina sequence in *Star Wars*. These are generals picked up along the way from allied planets. They comprise one jellyfish, a dinosaur, a rock-like creature, a beetle and a female who is half plant, half woman.

They're led by Cloppen, the latest dead-ringer for Darth Vader, hiding his lights under a bushel of masks and accompanied everywhere he goes by a wicked black leopard, attacking anyone who dares refuse his master's orders.

And I wouldn't be averse to seeing any of that lot on my television once a week. How about you? If we can't persuade our British TV Zeers to buy the series, maybe someone will buy the movie version . . .





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